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THE LADY FROM L.U.S.T. **LAI**D IN THE **FUT**URE

Rod Gray



Eve Drum, secret agent on a sex trek,
finds herself in a weird, unisex world...

#12

Threat From Outer Space

It went on destroying the wheat. The farmhouse went with the wheat. There was nothing left, no wood, no stone. Nothing.

"Jeez," breathed David.

The planes swung around and came back.

They might as well have been mosquitoes.

We sat and watched the destruction and we all felt so damn helpless.

I think we all had the same thoughts.

We were tuned in on the end of our world.

Laid In The Future

by Rod Gray

A TOWER BOOK

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CHAPTER ONE



The purple disc came down out of the clouds and swooped low above the Kansas wheat fields where the wind rippled the long grain. It was not a large disc, it was too small to hold human beings. Its cargo was much deadlier.

Its metallic sides gleamed brightly.

From the dozen glass panes on the underside of the disc, purplish light began to glow. The disc moved at about fifty miles an hour, and the brighter those purple shafts became, the hotter grew the air below them.

I watched the disc as if I were hypnotized.

My behind was perched on the edge of the chair in the Audience Room of the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists. A big television set had been put up when the man from the future had first begun speaking to the Earth. We were watching the purple disc on a color teevee screen, and not liking the show at all.

My name is Eve Drum. I am the lady from L.U.S.T.

David Anderjanian is my case officer, who gives me orders and assignments. He was directly to my right. To my left sat The General, who is the boss-man over all of L.U.S.T. The League of Underground Spies and Terror-

ists is a by-blow of the C.I.A. with a little mixture of the National Security Agency thrown in for good measure.

My job at L.U.S.T. is to fight the fire of foreign governments with the flames of resistance. I kill or get killed to keep freedom the way she is in the United States. Usually my work takes me out of Uncle Sam country to all corners of the world.

Right now the whole world was united.

Earth was afraid of only one thing.

The Future.

The purple disc had come from the year 3693. At least, that's what The Voice claimed. The Voice had come for the first time about a week before.

The Voice had said, "People of Earth, this is your future ruler speaking. My name is unimportant, for the moment. What is more important, vitally important to you, is how long you have to live."

It went away then, just as suddenly as it had cut in on every television and radio set in the whole damned world. The ones that were turned on, anyhow. Everyone had heard The Voice as it interrupted the telecasts then taking place, in some way in which the scientists could not even guess.

At first, everybody thought it was a joke.

Locally, that is. When the newspapers and the broadcasters went to work, the world learned the same message had been broadcast in England, France, Italy, behind the Iron Curtain, in Africa and even in back of the Bamboo Curtain.

The world was a little shook.

Red China offered to make friends with Russia and the United States. That gives an idea of how bad it was, the quiet panic that ran down the backbones of every man and woman on the planet. Russia called on the hot line to ask if this was a capitalist trick. When the Kremlin learned that the Pentagon was just as worried as it was, ideologies took a back seat.

First of all, man had to stay alive to practice any doctrine. The United Nations exploded with oratory. Red China was invited to send emissaries to the big building in New York City that flew the blue and white flag. There was to be no trumpeting of Marxist doctrines. There was none, which can give an idea of how worried everybody was.

Two nights later, The Voice came back.

"People of the past, listen! One week from today, over the wheat fields of western Kansas, a purple disc shall appear. Your sets will be trained on it. There is nothing you have to do, it will be done for you. Watch what happens."

So here I was, with the rest of the world, sitting around and waiting. The purple disc had appeared. It was glowing with power, a power you could sense just by looking at the damned thing.

David breathed, "Hang on to your hats!"

Every man and woman who owned a teevee set was glued to it. They wanted to learn what was going to happen just as much as we did at L.U.S.T. headquarters. The only difference was, we intended to do something about it. Or thought we did, anyhow.

The United States Air Force was in the air, ready. A thousand interceptor planes were up there over Kansas, waiting for the word. They were ready to swoop down and destroy the disc when the President gave the word.

The President was in the Pentagon, surrounded by the brass. He had the finest military minds in the world there with him: ours, the English, the French, the Russians. There were more generals in the Pentagon for this occasion than there were rooms.

The disc glowed sullenly. It came on steadily, its purple lights getting brighter and brighter.

Then:

"Oh my God," The General said.

There were no more rippling seas of wheat. They had disappeared completely. There was just bare, scorched

earth where the wheat had been. Nothing but bare dirt. No wheat. And the disc went on making its run, sweeping the wheat away like a magic broom.

A red light flickered to life on the monitor in front of The General. He sighed and leaned back, saying, "There it is. The President has ordered the planes to attack."

We saw them almost at the same moment, coming from out of the clouds with the sun at their backs, their cannon belching flame. We did not hear the sounds, but we saw the explosions on the metallic surface of the purple disc.

The disc ignored them.

It went on destroying the wheat. There was a farmhouse down below, out of which the people had been evacuated by Presidential order, some days ago. The farmhouse went with the wheat. There was nothing left, no wood, no stone. Nothing.

"Jeez," breathed David.

The planes swung around and came back.

They might as well have been mosquitoes.

We sat and watched the destruction and we all felt so damn helpless. My eyes were smarting with unshed tears. I could hear David swearing steadily under his breath. The General looked like an old man, suddenly, in the glare from the dim lights.

I think we all had the same thoughts.

We were tuned in on the end of our world.

Then the purple shafts disappeared. The destruction stopped. Exactly twelve miles of wheat and farm and countryside had been levelled to nothingness by those eerie beams of light. For a few seconds we stared at the disc in mingled hate and horror. Then the disc disappeared. Just like that. It was there one moment, then it was gone.

The planes circling all around the spot looked suddenly feeble and ridiculous. They had been able to do nothing more than the rest of the folks on Earth, who were just sitting and watching, to stop that thing. Nobody blamed

them. Everybody knew there was nothing that anyone could do.

The television went blank. The man to the right of The General leaned forward and shut it off.

I stared around me at the hard faces. Every eye was staring back at me. No kidding. At first I thought it was kind of a joke, except that nobody was in a jesting mood. I smiled around the room. Ten men, twenty eyes, all looking at poor little me.

Finally my feminine instincts twitched. Ordinarily, this would have meant that the purple disc was my job. It was up to me to stop it. But if it came from the future, I was safe enough.

I said out loud, "That was a regular nightmare. It's a shame there isn't anything we can do about it."

The General cleared his throat.

David Anderjanian grinned. Then I knew for sure. The Marquis de Sade would have loved David Anderjanian's reactions to sending me off on a deadly mission. I sat up straight and glared back at him.

"You've got to be kidding!" I yelled.

"I haven't said a word, Eve."

"You don't have to. I know the symptoms."

He spread his hands placatingly. Everybody was grinning, now. He said, "Eve, it's for the sake of the whole world. Surely you won't even think of refusing."

I was absolutely flabbergasted. I said, "Now look. The purple disc came from the future, right?"

"From the year 3693," nodded The General.

"It isn't a hoax?"

"No hoax," said David, grinned more broadly.

"And you expect me—all alone—to stop it?"

"Right the second time," said The General.

"Oh, now look! This is just a gag, right?"

"Wrong. You are going to volunteer to go almost two thousand years into the Future, Eve. You are our only hope."

I ran my baby blues around the room, very slowly. I could read my sentence without being told. Eve Drum was going into the Future. How, I had not the faintest notion. But they were going to tell me. Oh my, yes.

So I asked, quite naturally, "How?"

The General hunched forward. He was a big, handsome man, he had been a three-star general in the armed forces before the government had reached out to tap him for the job of heading the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists. He had been in the Tank Corps, I believe. He acted like a tank, too, running roughshod over everybody in his command and enforcing his demands by his bullying tactics.

For a change, he was almost gentle.

"Eve, some weeks before the purple disc appeared, even before we heard The Voice, a small black box arrived at the Pentagon."

Nobody knew what the little black box was. It simply appeared one morning on the desk of the only five-star general in the place at the moment. Fortunately, the five-star general had brains. When his investigation showed that nobody had been able to get in and leave the box, he sent for some scientific help.

They were all sitting around staring at the thing when it spoke. "Will someone please say something, so I will know whether I am addressing an intelligent human being?"

"I'll be damned!" shouted Five Stars.

"There is not sufficient data there to form a conclusion as to intelligence."

The officer flushed beet red. A scientist hid his smile and leaned forward, saying softly, "The formula for the conversion of mass into energy is, energy equals mass times the square of the speed of light."

"I will accept that," said the black box.

There was a short silence. Then the box resumed speaking. "I am a recording device. I have come from the

year 3693 with information about building a time machine."

"Oh my God," yelled Five Stars.

He shushed when the scientists made frantic gestures.

"In my time era, there is a man named Anders Orion. He is ruler of Earth, what you would term a dictator, a tyrant. It is his hope to conquer the entire time stratum.

"This box has been prepared by the Resistors, a movement formed to fight Anders Orion, to overcome him by force or whatever method will work. Unfortunately, however, we of the future have lost much of the aggressiveness of our forefathers.

"None of us can kill."

There was more silence. Then:

"Perhaps, 'assassinate' is a better word to use. We can kill in the mass, not in the singular. None of our generation could take a revolver or a rayer and use it against Anders Orion.

"For that, we need a killer from your time.

"History records the deeds of the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists, how it was a balance in the Era of the Cold Wars, to maintain peace between the two greatest nations on Earth. It also mentions a person named Eve Drum. We would appreciate your sending this Eve Drum to us."

At this point in his story, The General leaned back and beamed on me. "You see, Eve? They even asked for you by name."

"I don't believe it," I moaned.

"Eve," said David in a pained voice.

I turned to him. "But why *me*? Why not one of the others—Todd Clarke, for instance, or Dermot Wilkins?"

His broad shoulders shrugged. "I'm not sure. Why don't we listen to the rest of the story and find out?"

I smiled at The General. He went on with his tale.

"The reason for the naming of Eve Drum is quite simple. Aside from her most excellent qualifications, she also meets the size and weight standard. You see, we Resistors

do not possess the very powerful trans timers that Anders Orion possesses.

"He can send a battleship back into Time. We cannot. If we could do so, we would ask for your best operative. As it is, we must settle for this Eve Drum."

"How about that!" I murmured.

The General smiled at me. "Actually, Eve, I take this for quite a compliment. They know your name and your deeds, two thousand years from now. Not everybody can say that."

"I wish I couldn't," I breathed.

The black box had told them that it was the first of several. There would be a red box, a blue box, and finally a yellow box. These vox-cubes would contain all the data necessary for twentieth-century scientists to use the knowledge of thirty-seventh-century scientists. The information would be translated into terms readily understandable by men of our Time Era.

"And did they come?" I asked.

"On time, if I may make a pun," smiled David. I glared at him, then looked at The General.

The General chuckled. "Anderjanian is correct. The red box came and was taken immediately to Time Travel, the name of that section of the National Institute for Advanced Scientific Research that the government took over for this project.

"We borrowed men from all branches of life for the job. From colleges and universities, from the research departments of big corporations. Men came from England, France, all over Europe, including Russia. For a change, everybody was united on a single project."

"How come? Didn't my old friends the Russkys think it was a decadent capitalistic trick?"

"They saw and heard the telecasts. They heard the voice in Russian, of course, not in our language. It convinced them they were up against a force greater even than their megaton bombs.

"So today, we have a regular league of nations assisting us in our researches. Even Red China was asked to join—and did. They sent us Lin Foo Chong."

"Never heard of him," I said.

"Lin Foo Chong was the guiding genius behind their atom bomb. A very brilliant man. He has been most helpful."

"And with all this talent, you still need *me*?"

"They can build the Time Traveler, which the men of the future name the 'transitimer.' They cannot travel in it. Only you can do that, since it has been built to your specifications."

"Yeah, hey," I murmured dolefully.

My shoulders slumped. I thought about all the nice things like my luxury apartment in New York City that I would be giving up, my wardrobe of Ceil Chapman and Yves St. Laurent gowns and dresses I would not be wearing. I let myself dwell on my ultrasmart Shelby Cobra GT car.

David Anderjanian can read me like a book. He leaned over and, with his big paw enveloping my hand, said consolingly, "Think of all the future fashions you'll be seeing—and wearing."

Well, maybe he had a point there.

I brightened somewhat.

David also said, "They may even have come up with a couple of new love postures."

My nickname in L.U.S.T. is Oh Oh Sex. The boys all know my devotion to the love arts. Their eyes fastened on me hopefully.

"I don't believe there are any," I said slowly. "But on the other hand, after two thousand years—somebody must have come up with *something* new."

"It's right up your alley," David grinned.

"Never mind my alley," I grinned back.

The General laughed happily. "Then I take it you'll

accept, Eve? The world can count on you? I'll tell the boys at the Institute to get ready for take-off?"

"I'll go, General," I told him.

David Anderjanian stood up, reaching for my hand and pulling me to my feet. I looked around, reading hope, envy, curiosity in the eyes that stared at me. I was going to the Future, those eyes told me. Mine was the opportunity to know what would happen before it ever did.

Me, I felt like a dumb guinea pig.

I clung to David all the way along the metallic corridors of L.U.S.T. headquarters and out into the brilliant spring sunshine. It was a glorious day, bright and warm. It made me feel glad to be alive. It also scared me.

"Will the weather be the same in the future?" I asked David. Stupid question, of course, but I was a bit rocky at the moment. The idea of what I was letting myself in for was just getting me.

"The sun will still shine and rains will fall," he told me, somewhat poetically, I thought.

"Don't you leave me," I snapped. "I'm scared."

The astronauts get a lot of training for what they have to do. I was going into this cold.

His big arm hugged me. "I won't, honey."

"When is take-off?"

"Tomorrow morning at ten. I'll take you home, tuck you in, see that you get a good night's sleep."

"The hell you will. You'll take me dining and dancing, that's what you're going to do. And afterwards you're going to stay in my apartment against an attack of the screaming meemies."

David brightened. "Condemned girl's last meal sort of thing? Sounds all right to me."

We said good-bye to The General and the brass outside the headquarters building. David escorted me to his Cadillac convertible. I got in, showing off my legs in my Hanes stockings: blue, to go with my pale blue, mini-skirted and highwaisted dress of sari fabric from The

Candy Happening. I wore pearls about my neck, and a pearl ring on a finger.

"Where to first?" he asked.

It was still early afternoon. I said, "A drive. The Earth looks pretty good to me right now. I want to see more of it."

We drove up the Deegan and the Thruway.

On the way back, David said, "Let's stop off at the Column. We ought to be in time for the six-thirty meal."

The Column was an eaterie a few miles from Peach Lake. It served two meals, one at six-thirty, one at nine-thirty. Its big dining room held about sixty people, no more. The menu was in French.

There was a bar, you walked into it when you went in the door. From the outside, the place was nothing special. You might drive by it without ever thinking to go in and sample its cooking. David Anderjanian enjoyed his food, one of his hobbies was going around to new places and ordering up whatever caught his fancy.

He had never taken me to the Column before.

We were half an hour early, but the bar was open so we ordered sazeracs. One sazerac is plenty for me, but David must have two. He is a big man, he looks like a Viking stuck into a Brooks Brothers suit. He is six feet four inches tall and as big and as muscular as a pro football linebacker. He needs his vitamins, the dear.

I lingered over my drink, sopping up the atmosphere of the Column. I was discovering that everything seemed sharper, more alive, than I had ever noticed. The drink was stronger, the air clearer. I loved the smells of the cooking foods, the sight of the bar and the pictures on the walls.

We went inside. A waiter brought a blackboard on stilts, on which was written the menu in chalk.

"Ragout of porc-au-vin rouge," David ordered for us both. "And I want a well-seasoned salad to go with it, lightly sprinkled with pepper, olive oil and wine vinegar."

Oh, yes—and add a bottle of Chateauneuf du Pape.” He pondered over desserts, then settled for chocolate mousse.

The meal was all it sounded. Perfect. I ate and ate. Even when I was lingering over the chocolate mousse and coffee, I did not feel too full. David beamed at me.

“Liked it, didn’t you?”

“Honey, it was scrumptious.”

“You’ll sleep well after a meal like this.”

“I hope so.”

Inside me, I was uptight. Hell, who wouldn’t be? I was taking off for parts unknown. We know more about Mars and Venus than we do about the future. The year 3693 could have more surprises for me than ten packages of Crackerjacks. Little did I know!

David reached out, patted my hand.

“You’ll be fine. If need be, I’ll rock you to sleep.”

“How?” I shot back.

“Any way you want.”

It sounded promising. “And you’re going to stay with me, too, you know,” I added darkly. “No running off to go home.”

“Cross my heart, hope to die. I stay.”

I nestled up to him on the ride back to the city with my head on his shoulder, my arm tucked in his. He refused to one-arm drive—my safety was a National Emergency—and he was taking no chances.

To my surprise, the combination of food and fresh air made me sleepy. I told myself, no sleep this night. You’re going to take some pleasant memories into 3693 with you, if nothing else but the clothes you wear.

David pulled the car into my apartment parking lot, then came around and opened the door for me. He was being quite the gentleman, I must say. I guess he figured my last night on Earth in my own Time Era should be a happy one.

I gave him my key, let him unlock my suite door.

The dim lights came on. I dropped my handbag into a

chair and walked across the inch-thick wall-to-wall carpeting, kicking off my shoes as I went. I am a lot shorter than David even with high heels on. Without them, I felt like a child. He grinned down at me from his superior male height and waited for me to make the moves.

I think the difference in our heights added to my blue mood. I felt my lips quiver, the way a baby's lips quiver when it is about to burst into tears. David read the signal right.

"Hey! None of that. No blubbering."

"I'm s-s-scared."

He reached down, put his hands under my armpits and lifted me up. He kissed me. For a long time. Using his tongue and lips like a vacuum cleaner. I oozed against him, feeling the emotions swimming around inside me.

David knows how to turn me on, all right. His hands were sliding up under the blue sari material of my mini-gown, settling onto my pantied behind. His arms were tightening like the tentacles of an octopus, holding me to him.

For some strange reason, his technique worked just the reverse. I burst into tears. I bawled.

"Hey, now. Hey, now," he said.

"I c-c-can't he-help it. I f-feel deserted."

"Not by me," he declared.

He carried me into the bedroom.

Honest, I did not want sex. I just wanted comforting. I nestled to him and clung. I felt like a baby. I guess David sensed my worry, he was very gentle as he sat me down on the edge of the bed and began undoing snaps and fasteners. I raised my arms as he drew the dress off.

"You match," he grinned.

I had on pale blue panties, blue garterbelt, cobwebby blue brassiere and the blue nylons. I looked down at myself and giggled.

"Do I do the rest?" he asked.

I nodded, turning my back so he could unfasten my

Warner. The bra cups came down, my pale white breasts came out, faintly shaking. David bent his head and kissed each nipple very tenderly.

My hand ruffled his hair.]

"You're good for me, David," I told him.

He said nothing smartalecky, as is his habit at times like this. [He kissed my pouting lips, also very tenderly. Really, he was outdoing himself.

I stood up. He knelt down, gripped my blue panties and pulled them down off my hips, gently. He leaned to kiss my bellybutton. I smiled and bumped my hips against him.

His hands unfastened my garters, rolled down my stockings. I lifted a foot so he could ease off a shoe. He pulled the stocking off. He turned to the other leg. The garterbelt came off, too.]

"What nightie?" he asked, staring up at my nudity.

"None," I said.

I turned my behind on him, threw back the covers. David watched me, he tucked the covers up about my chin, then started to get undressed himself.

Know what I did? I fell asleep, just as his pants were coming down. Oh Oh Sex herself. Like I'd had a full day and was expecting to have a fuller tone tomorrow. I was beat.

CHAPTER TWO

I woke to the feel of a naked body alongside me.

My eyelids rose. It was David, breathing softly. His left arm was about me, holding me close. I kissed his hairy chest, very tenderly. I bit his nipple, nibbling it.

My hand went downward.

Then I remembered and sat up straight. David moved protestingly. I was going into the Future today. I swung about to the clock radio on my night table. It was almost nine.

I flopped down on my case officer and hugged him.

"David, an hour. It's nine."

"Jeez!" he almost screamed. "We're late!"

He was out of bed, running naked for his clothes. I might as well have been a clothing store dummy. I was sitting there bare naked and he was worried about shooting me off into the Future.

"David," I wailed.

He swung about to me, reached for me. At least, I thought he was about to grab and console me. But the tenderness time was over. His big hand grabbed the covers and flung them back, baring little old me to the whole world.

"Raus mit! Up, up!"

"The hell with you," I yelled.

So he grabbed me, yanked me onto my feet and clapped a hand to my bare behind. It was the signal to go to work. I sighed and shrugged.

I got dressed. We had a little less than an hour to get to the National Institute for Advanced Scientific Research, which left us very little time for breakfast. And David likes his breakfast.

I grabbed up my black nylon brassiere and panties. I was reaching for a garterbelt when David said, "No garterbelt, no stockings. No time. Besides, you don't get to wear clothes, going into the Future."

I did a doubletake. "How's that again?"

"No clothes. Transiter won't take them."

"I go *naked*?" I howled.

His eyes went over me in my bra and panties, telling me I had nothing to worry about.

I yelled, "Oh, no. I've been planning on wearing that new black and white crepe number by John Kloss, the one with the diaphanous midriff."

"Well, you can't take it with you."

I stamped my foot. David ignored it.

I put on the black and white crepe anyhow. I was determined that I would be the belle of the ball until take-off time. It was kind of appropriate, that.

We feasted on hot coffee and crumb buns in the little shop down the street. Then we beat feet for the car. David zoomed out of the parking lot and into the morning traffic.

At one minute to ten we strolled into the Institute. A special elevator ran up to the fifth floor. There were uniformed Marines on guard. Their eyes in their hard young faces turned to follow me as I went in to my fate through the swinging glass doors.

The General glanced at his wristwatch. "You just

about made it. All right, all right, I know how you must feel. Let's move it."

We moved it into a big room that was empty except for a metal cube about ten feet tall and five feet wide. Its sides were of dull grey metal. It seemed to scowl at me.

"Is that it?"

"It is," growled The General. "Get undressed."

There was a lot of brass there, men from damn near every country on the globe. Not to mention all the scientific eggheads. And here I was in my John Kloss original, about to get rid of it before their eyes. I didn't feel like doing a strip. Hell, all I felt like doing was turning on a heel and bolting out of here.

David stepped forward. "I'll help you, honey."

[He bent and raised my skirt. Everybody stared at my legs, at my pantied hips and brassiere and bare midriff as the black and white crepe went up. My brassiered breasts hove into view, then the thing was up over my head. David handed it to The General.

David undid my brassiere. He pulled down my panties.]
"The shoes, Eve." I kicked out of them.

A uniformed man opened the door of the Time Traveler.

[I stepped forward, letting my hips swing. I might as well give the boys a show while I was at it. My breasts jounced, my buttocks shook.

Some nice man gave a wolf whistle. I beamed at him.]

Then I was stepping inside the transitimer, onto warm carpeting. David blew me a kiss. My lips quivered. Somehow, I was disappointed about the whole thing. I'd expected fanfares of trumpets, I guess. Maybe The General was smarter than I gave him credit for.

He was dealing with a female. The idea was not to futz around but to shove her the hell inside the goddam thing and get rid of her. Let her do her bawling in 3693. Which is just what they were doing, all right.

The man at the door swung it shut.

The clang almost deafened me.

I stared around me. The inner walls were clear plastic or clear metal, like glass. I could see banks of wired relays beyond the three transparent walls, and a heterogeneous mass of gadgets that I could make neither head nor tail of. I knew this thing was an invention of the future. The Resistors had told our boys how to build it. This was the result.

Then the thought touched my mind: Suppose the damn thing exploded, midway between here and my destination point?

"Hey, get me out of here," I yelled.

I tried to take a step forward. Nothing moved.

I told myself to try harder, like Avis. I was as if turned to stone. Then I glanced down at where my hand should have been. My hand was not there. Neither was my body.

Just mist, shaped like Eve Drum.

Grey mist, tenuous and stirring. I vaguely remembered that someone had said that my body would be changed into some kind of energy, thanks to the action of the transitizer.

Inside the walls, lights were flashing on and off. There was a faint humming. The cube seemed to shake, quivering. I got a bit panicky; I knew I was on my way. I had not the faintest notion how this thing worked; maybe if I'd understood its functioning, I would have been more at ease. Or maybe I wouldn't.

I was growing. Yeah, spreading out like the mist I was. I no longer had eyes and ears, but I could see and hear. My entire body covered the inside of the box. I had become a part of the gimmicks and the gadgets beyond the walls.

There was no sensation of movement, as such. I just sort of hung inside the metallic cube and the relay circuits and all that complicated gadgetry did its stuff. I felt real stupid, not knowing anything about this time car I was riding in, then I remembered that I would have been just

as dumb in one of those space capsules that go to the moon and back.

I could never understand those things and what made them tick, so why should I bother about understanding something that was built by the men of the future? Ease back, Eve, I told myself, and just enjoy the ride.

The ride took forever, it seemed. Later, I learned I had spent two and a half hours inside the transitimer.

My first indication that I was in the future was when I was no longer so nebulous. The grey mist that was me began coming back from the far corners of the cube. This mist shaped itself slowly into something like feminine curves.

Then it started to solidify.

Finally I stood in the cube, stark naked.

I waited. The humming was growing fainter, the vibrations were lessening. The flashing of lights slackened off.

My heart was thudding excitedly. I was not sure just what I expected to find in the year 3693. Brilliant, handsome men and gorgeous women, of course. That went without saying. Marvelous inventions, too. Any civilization that could build a transitimer could certainly have other marvels at which a twentieth-century girl-girl would ooh and aah.

Machinery whirred.

The door slid open, slowly. I peeked around the receding edge, and found myself staring into a chamber of blue metal and grey, with tinted glassite columns. The air was cool and sweet as it flowed inside my time car.

But there were no men and women.

Oh, there were people, all right. But no men and women, nor children, either. The people I was staring at—and who were staring back at my face just as hard—were neither one nor the other.

They wore futuristic costumes, of a metallic cloth and some kind of transparent plastic (I had to give them twentieth-century names because those were all I knew),

that fitted to their bodies. This metallic cloth and plastic bent when they bent, stretched when they stretched. The colors were red and blue and grey, pink and purple and white. All sorts of colors, all sorts of costumes.

The people themselves were neither male nor female.

Honest Injun! They were a little of each. You might say they were effeminate men, or very manly women. Take your choice.

One man was lean and well muscled, he looked like a fighting man, except for his torso. Behind twin shields of plastic he had breasts that I envied. His nipples were dark brown and long, clearly revealed behind the transparent stuff. And his hips were as rounded as my own. Beside him was a man-woman with legs to rival those of Dietrich herself, and soft, slender arms. A face that would make this one a movie star after a single screen test. But in between he-she had the body of an Olympic weight-lifter.

If a mad deity with godlike powers had decided to scramble the sexes, this might have been the result. The two examples I have mentioned were a little extreme. The others were more in the soft grey range, neither too much of one nor too little of the other.

The worst part of it was—

They had had expressions of outraged horror on their faces.

I was standing there naked, of course. You'd have thought I was at a convention of priests and ministers, except that the laity would have been more understanding. They made gestures of disgust and turned away their faces.

And old man stepped forward. "You please to forgiving them. Not knowing how it was, long ago."

I nodded dazedly. "I don't get it."

His face went blank. "Get it?" he repeated.

"I don't understand," I murmured.

His pink face brightened. "I explaining. Me am Talnov

Kuyzen. Others," he waved a hand at the people who were staring off into the distance, at any place but me, "are not conditioned as me, from seeing pictures of sexes."

"Sexes," I said slowly.

His head nodded happily. "Sexes, yes. No sex in future, no more. All gone. Sex just something to read about in history books."

Oh my God! If David Anderjanian could hear that.

I tottered slightly in utter shock. His thickly veined white hand caught my wrist to steady me. He could not control his grimace of disgust, but like a gentleman, he covered it up.

"Well, for Pete's sake! If you folks are so dead set against sex, why did you bother sending for me?" I yelled impolitely.

"Needing someone from past, to do kill."

"Oh, yeah. Anders Orion. Is he one of them?"

The white-haired head shook slowly. "No, no. He is Tyron of Earth. Most powerful man. Rule all."

A cold wind swept down the corridor, raising my goose bumps. I shivered and looked appealingly at Talnov Kuyzen. He hit his forehead with the heel of his hand. At least some things haven't changed very much, I reassured Oh Oh Sex.

"You come me," he stated.

He started walking off across the metal room. I ran after him on my bare tippytoes, casting curious glances at the averted faces of the welcoming delegation. Their disgust was clear to read, amounting almost to a sickness. I noted that most of these people were in early middle age. The only old person was Talnov Kuyzen.

"What about babies?" I asked, innocently enough.

He whirled like a dervish, clapping his hand over my mouth. His black eyes glared at me. "Ssssh! You must not speak of that. It is forbidden."

"Well, okay, okay! If you say so."

"Indoctrinating you necessary. Must teach you is what good to say and such is bad."

I giggled. His English was awful. When I told him so, he got a dumbfounded look on his face, and drew himself up proudly.

"I is foremost scholar of era, about olden time things. I only man speaking old language as she is—was," he corrected himself hastily.

"You may be the foremost scholar, Pops, but your syntax is still god-awful. I can hardly understand you."

I remembered the old Anglo-Saxon words, like in *Beowulf*, that I'd read in the past. There wasn't much more than a thousand years between those words and modern English. There were a couple of thousand years between my time and this.

"Nonebody speak your language but me," he went on proudly. "Must teaching you mine own language."

"I hate school," I groused.

He laughed softly. "Not school. Nothing more schools. Is got better way learn. Easy, like grapff."

"Well, if you say so," I muttered dubiously.

If the kids I knew back in the twentieth century could hear that. No more school. Perpetual vacation time. Wowee!

The metal corridors were a labyrinth of tunnels, swept with a clean, sweet air that bore in places, the tang of pine and the scent of salt water, the fragrance of honeysuckle and the lemony smell of sage. It was very pleasing.

We came to a blank wall. Or what looked like a blank wall, to my untrained eyes. Talnov Kuyzen waved his hand at it. Part of the wall slid back. I walked into a room where all sorts and manners of costumes (I could not yet bring myself to call them clothes) hung in the empty air.

"What keeps them up?"

"Magnetic controls," he said impatiently.

He moved along the row of garments, shaking his head

at this one and then that. He went too fast to please me. David would have loved me in a couple of these numbers.

There was one clear-plastic creation that he would have flipped over. It was preshaped to the body and it had been made for a person with a distinctly feminine body. I would have looked scrumptious in it. The only trouble was, it would have showed that Eve Drum was very deserving of her nickname of Oh Oh Sex, and "sex" around these parts was a real dirty word. Like "babies."

The old man yanked down something in blue metal and plastic and held it up. With his head tilted to one side, he considered it, then let his prejudiced glance run over my nakedness.

"This may do," he nodded. "Put it on."

I ignored him to slip my legs into the thing and wriggle around until I had it up to my armpits. The thing was damn tight about the bosom, and I protested loudly to Talnov Kuyzen.

"It hurts," I told him. "It squeezes."

"Good. It will hiding your—ah—feminine attributes."

"Oh, yeah? Well if that means I get to suffer, forget it. My feminine attributes are hanging out, pops."

I reached for the clear-plastic number. When I had it in my hands, I saw that colors had been tinted into it, so that some of my body would be hidden, once I had it on.

I shrugged out of the blue metal job and into the plastic. It fitted like a glove. My legs were clad in shimmering rainbow tints, so were my hips. In between hips and breasts the clear transparent plastic permitted my navel and lower ribs to show. There was a faint strip of color where my breasts bulged, not enough to hide them, really, just enough to make them provocative.

I modeled it for Talnov Kuyzen.

His face was glum. He said, "It shows you being a female woman."

"Well, in case you haven't noticed, Pops—I am."

He made himself smile frostily. "Is make you very visible. Get many notices."

What woman wouldn't respond to that?

"I'm ready," I told him.

He nodded and led the way out. "Must teaching you talk words," he mumbled. "No good not able making self understood."

We went into another room. There were two men-women in it. They stared at us, then looked away quickly.

Almost angrily, Talnov Kuyzen spoke to them, and they looked somewhat shamefaced. He spoke a language that made no sense to me, though there were some words that sounded more or less familiar. It was as if he were leaving out certain vowels and consonants that would have made all the difference in the world.

The old man led me to a red metal bathtub from which varicolored cables and wires fed off into the walls and ceiling. With an impish grin, he turned to me.

"Is school. You learning."

I went to school by lying down in the bathtub. It was not a bathtub at all, of course, it was some sort of gadget with a soft lining and fresh air fed into it, which I discovered when they put a top on the damn thing.

Talnov Kuyzen waved a hand at me.

I fell asleep.

I woke up just as they were sliding the lid off.

One of the schoolteachers said, "Did you sleep well?"

I understood him perfectly. I said, "Fine, thank you." I had to help myself up, neither of the people would touch me with a ten-foot pole. I was a *female*!

"Why?" I asked. "Why won't you look at me?"

I flaunted myself before their averted faces. I looked damn good in my rainbow-tinted bit of transparent plastic. Real sexy. The two schoolteachers looked sick.

One of them said bravely, "I'm sorry to say this, but the sight of you is sickening to us."

"Gee golly. Thanks." I hesitated, then asked, "What do I call you? Fellas? Girls?"

I did a boo-boo with that word "girls." There was no such thing on Earth any more. I apologized fluently, feeling sorry for their stricken faces.

Talnov Kuyzen came into the room, beaming with happiness. "Now I can speak to you and teach you things myself," he said.

"First of all, there is no sex here in the future. Everyone is of one sex. A unisex. Neither man nor woman, a little of each, perhaps."

"Yech," I said.

He smiled, nodding. "I can understand how you feel. In turn, you must try to understand us.

"In the year 3524, this planet Earth passed through a dust cloud. The dust cloud affected the hormones and the genes in the human body. It altered the sexual characteristics of almost everyone."

He shrugged. "Naturally, there was panic and chaos everywhere. The people were faced with a completely sexless future. It drove many people mad. There were many who could live with such a prospect, and these took hold of the reins of government, all over the world. National barriers went down before this—to them—catastrophic happening.

"Perhaps governments, like the former males, lost much of their aggressiveness with their change of sex. At any rate, for the first time ever, the entire world was at peace. Ideas were exchanged, delegations from one nation to another became the order of the day.

"The world prospered, really.

"There were new inventions, fresh ways of doing old things. In one century there was a renaissance of culture and technology. The unisex people built a whole new world. A better world."

I wanted to argue, but I kept my mouth shut.

"You see, without sex to distract one, more things

could get done, faster and better. Today we have many new wonders because of this resurgence of brain power."

"If you say so," I murmured.

He turned a smiling face toward me. "I cannot expect understanding from a twentieth-century person. I know that. Your kind are too ridden with sexual needs and hungers. You cannot help it, it is the animal in you."

I could have swatted him.

"But it is this very animalism we stand in need of, at the moment. Not only is sex abhorrent to us, but so is violence.

"I believe you have been told by your own leaders that we of the future need a paid killer. None of the unisex can kill. It is anathema to their very natures. The most we can do is stun.

"You will kill for us."

"Anders Orion," I nodded. "Tell me about him."

"He came to power about fifteen years ago, during the days when the entire world was thinking about creating a unified world government. While all of us talked about it, pro and con, Anders Orion acted.

"He formed a small, mobile army—"

"How?" I asked. "If all aggressive instincts were weeded out of your people, how could he do that?"

"I do not know, but he did. And this army simply moved in on the various world capitals, arrested the men in high places, put them in jails. He appointed deputies to serve him and his one-man government. Today he is Tyron over everybody."

"Not a nice Tyron, eh?"

The old man threw up his hands in holy horror. "A vicious, cruel man. Not content with governing us, he has set out to rule the past, as well. You saw the discorion, that purple disc that razed your Kansas farmlands?"

I remembered the purple disc and felt anger gather inside me. This was my job, to destroy Anders Orion. I

would do it, then run, not walk, back to the arms of David Anderjanian. I nodded.

"I'm ready, any time you are," I smiled.

"We must be careful. Secretive. If Orion ever discovered what we're up to, he'd blast this corner of the world out of existence."

"Just what and where is this corner of the world?"

"We who are rebelling against the Tyron call ourselves, 'The Sisters.' It is a contraction of 'the resisters.' We are dedicated to the continuance of individual freedom. We are against tyranny."

"I'm with you there," I agreed.

"I knew you would be," he said complacently.

"But what do I do? How do I get to see this Orion?"

"All in good time. You see, we must place you so that your—ah—sexual characteristics are not so noticeable."

"Hey now, if you're thinking of operating—"

"There is no need. I have not told you of the Mating Huts as yet."

"Yeah, tell me about them. They sound real interesting."

He smiled thinly, without humor. "Obviously, we must have some way of reproducing. Otherwise, by this time the human race would have ceased to exist."

"I wondered about that."

"When the dust cloud blanketed the Earth, there were some who were not affected by it. They remained—ah—men and women. They could have children. They did have children.

"For some years, these poor unfortunates were hunted down and killed by unthinking unisexed ones. Luckily for the race, all of them were not killed."

"Hey, now wait. This aggressiveness was wiped out, remember? How could the unisexed ones kill?"

"The aggressiveness went slowly, slowly. It seemed the only thing that affected the angers of mankind was sex."

Dog in the manger stuff, I thought. If I can't enjoy sex,

neither can you, buddy. Well, it might have been like that. But I began to have my doubts. Maybe—just maybe—Talnov Kuyzen was not telling me all he knew.

I played it cute.

I said, "All right, I'll buy that. Go on."

"Buy? Oh, an idiom of your time era. Hmm. You possessed a most colorful language, I must say. But to get back to the Mating Huts.

"There were intelligent unisexed ones among us who realized the danger of human extinction. Laws were passed. Mating huts were established, compounds where man and women might mingle and live, and freely mate.

"Naturally, there was no such thing as marriage, any more. And it was a selective breeding. The weak ones were destroyed. Only the finest specimens were retained."

I felt disgust.

Talnov Kuyzen went on. "When certain of the babies are born, tests are given them. If they retain any aggressiveness, they too are done away with. It goes without saying that if any—er—males or females are born, they are put to death, except for those chosen to be future mothers and fathers."

Yeah, hay. The dreamed-of future, where people are treated like cattle. The unisexes I did not think of as human beings, they were some sort of freaks born in an Earth-wide catastrophe.

We came into a big room fitted out with dining tables and chairs. The old man said, "We shall eat, it is time."

"I suppose we eat pills in this time," I said disconsolately. "Or maybe we drink something with all our vitamins in it."

"We are not barbarians," he chided me. "We enjoy the finer things in life. As a matter of fact, we have more time for them. Without sex to distract us, we can spend hours in lingering over a savory meal."

My stomach told me it would like to linger. I sat where Talnov Kuyzen told me to sit. We were the only folks in

the place. Then it dawned on me. At my expression he nodded, smiling slightly.

"The sight of you would upset their digestive systems," he said softly, almost sorrowfully. His words as much as told me he was making one big sacrifice, by eating with me.

It made a girl feel great.

"No waiters? No plates?" I asked.

His smile was very broad.

There was a soft whoosh, and a hover-cube sped toward us on its air cushion, without sound. It stopped at the table and a soft feminine voice asked for our order.

"Anything you want," amplified my companion.

The cube blinked its lights as I said, "Tomato juice, a health salad. Iced tea."

Talnov Kuyzen smiled and ordered a small steak, rare. With hot coffee. The hover-cube turned and sped off toward an aperture in the wall into which were fitted many other such mechanical waitresses. I admired the clean, crisp efficiency of the machines.

"Machines do most of our work, naturally. This frees us humans to a greater enjoyment of the sensual things, such as art, music, good food."

"But no—pardon the expression—sex."

"I'm sorry. No. We unisexes realize we are the ultimate adaptation of the human body. Sex was too much of a distraction in your day. We have done away with it, in ours."

"It was the one pleasure everybody could indulge in, rich or poor. It brought love and true companionship, it made our wheels go round."

He shook his head sorrowfully. "I could expect no other attitude from you, but you are wrong."

Another whoosh and the serving-cube slid up to our table. Metal strips jutted out, containing my order and that of Talnov Kuyzen. The food looked terrific.

"Efficient," I muttered.

"Computers do much of our work. A computer accepts electronic orders from the hover-cubes, relays them on to the preparation machines. In a matter of seconds, the helping is ready."

I ate like there was no tomorrow. Maybe there wouldn't be, for me, I told myself morosely. I polished off my health salad and tomato juice, sipped the iced tea.

I asked, "If you're putting me into one these Mating Huts, how do I contact Anders Orion?"

"He will contact you. For some reason we do not understand, Anders Orion often visits the Mating Huts. He claims that it is merely to make certain that the race is in no danger of extinction. This I do not believe. I feel confident there is another reason, but none of The Sisters knows what it is."

I stood up. "I'm ready."

Talnov Kuyzen nodded happily. He walked ahead of me out of the dining hall, where a large number of uni-sexes were waiting, faces averted from me, ready to enter the dining chamber for their midday meals as soon as I was out of it.

We stepped onto a strip of moving metal with a hand-rail that carried us for about a mile along a straight tunnel. We emerged onto a landing from which escalators traveled upward. These escalators had seats affixed to them, they are not the escalators we know in the twentieth century.

They made no sound, they simply moved, silently.

We came out on a flat street that ran off between towering white stone and glass buildings that rose upward into the sky itself. I guess I goggled a little, because Talnov Kuyzen chuckled.

"You are in the greater megapolis of New Yorkon. It comprises what, in your time, was New York, Westchester and Putnam Counties, parts of Connecticut and all Long Island. It is one of our larger megalopoli. More than twenty million people live here."

He lifted a small metal ball. When I stared at him inquiringly, he nodded for me to wait. In seconds a hover-car came swooping down a sidestreet. It drew up before us. The door opened silently.

"These hover-cars are free to the public," my companion told me. "You merely signal with this metal ball. The signal travels to the nearest hover-car that is empty. It accepts the signal, automatically shuts it off so no more than one hover-car responds. In this way, street traffic is kept to a minimum.

"As you will realize, the air cushion on which these cars travel cause no friction. There is no wear on the city streets and hence, no repairs are ever needed. The cars themselves move by means of solar energy, gathered in a tiny cell on top of the car and stored against need."

Talnov Kuyzen leaned forward. "The Mating Hut," he said and relaxed.

The hover-car gathered speed, it must have gone at over a hundred miles an hour, but there was no vibration, just the sound of softly whooshing air. It was very pleasant, the seats were soft and held one like a pair of lover's arms.

A huge round building loomed in the distance. This was the Mating Hut, my companion informed me. It was round to distinguish it from the rest of the buildings. There were round glass windows in it that glinted with afternoon sunlight. One thing I did not see, and that was doors.

The hover-car swung into a sidestreet. It headed straight for the Mating Hut wall.

"We're going to hit!" I screamed.

The old man chuckled. At that moment, a section of the wall slid back and the hover-car stopped before a landing platform. The door opened.

We got out.

Talnov Kuyzen shivered and sighed. I knew what he was thinking. It was against his grain that he should walk

into a Mating Hut. I guess he thought he was getting contaminated by his mere presence here.

"Cheer up," I told him. "You can leave right away. I'm the one who gets to stay."

He nodded glumly. Then he said, "Do not be surprised at what I tell the attendant. I can't tell them you come from the past. You are going to be an escapee from the Philashington Hut. You have been captured. You are being returned here for a fresh mating."

"Well, goody goody," I grinned.

"Please," he begged. "No obscenities."

I began then to feel a little sorry for the unisexes.

We walked through a bronze door into a carpeted lobby. To my surprise, a man—got up from behind the desk and stepped toward us. He had no eyes for Talnov Kuyzen. His big blue eyes were on me in my plastic and rainbow-tinted garment.

"Ah! A human being," he said, smiling.

The old man drew himself up to his full height. "You—you sexed ones are becoming entirely too insulting. You must remember that we unisexes are the true men. You are freaks!"

"Hi," I said.

He winked. A flood of relief washed over me. It had been a lecherous wink, one that told me I was one doll of a female and that the winker would love to bed me down. It made me feel right at home.

"I'm going to find you a special one," he said. "Somebody you can have some fun with. I take it you've been in the mating huts before?"

"I'm no virgin, if that's what you mean. I've been around, here and there."

Talnov Kuyzen was choking. "Please," he managed to get out. "No more, I beg you. These obscenities are making me actually sick to my stomach. And let me remind you that I consider myself a free thinker and extremely liberal."

The attendant grinned at him. "Sure thing, Pops. Whatever you say. And my thanks and that of all the Hut for finding us this one. She's going to be real popular here."

Talnov Kuyzen sniffed. He looked at me for a moment, nodded, and turned to leave. The door opened and closed behind him. I was on my own in the Mating Hut.

Not until later did I stop to realize that with all I had been through, all I had learned, nobody had bothered to tell me anything about Anders Orion. I had no special orders, no briefing, no orientation of any sort. I was on my own, with a vengeance.

Maybe I would get my orders later. Or maybe Talnov Kuyzen figured I'd know how to carry on by myself.

CHAPTER THREE

[The blond man took me into his arms, bent his head and kissed me with his open mouth. His hardness bulged into my loins as his arms tightened around me like the tentacles of an octopus. His lips and tongue were never still. I felt like a dainty tidbit about to be devoured by a starving man.

It was a great feeling.

He drew away his lips long enough to say, "My name is Evorn Ambol. I wish you hadn't come here while I was on desk duty because then I could have you for my own. As it is," and he sighed heavily, "I have to turn you over to somebody on the love lists for the day."

I patted his chest. "Maybe I can squeeze you in a little later," I soothed him. "No pun intended."

His delighted grin told me there were people in this Tomorrow World who appreciated sex jokes. I mentally went over a number of the ones I knew and kept handy for certain occasions. I told him the one about the French aviator in Paris during a leave in World War I. I thought he'd die, laughing.

He managed to get a card out of the file.

He scowled when he stared at it, shaking his head. "I

hate to do this to a sedol like you but—”

“Sedol?”

“Diminutive for ‘sex doll.’ Hey, where’ve you been all your life, you don’t know that?”

“Practicing what you’re preaching, doll baby,” I told him, leaning forward and pinching his cheek. He grinned and laughed a little, ruefully.

“Desk work always makes me sexy,” he apologized, “far more than the others inside the Hut. I guess I store up the old genes and—whammo! I get ready to explode when it comes my turn. Most of the people back in there are different from me, though. They’re icks.”

I remembered how elated I’d been to think I was going to learn something new in this thirty-seventh century, about sex. I was about to be disappointed, I guess.

“There isn’t much to do at the desk,” he admitted. “As a matter of fact, you’re the first admission I’ve ever handled. Most of the true humans in this corner of the world are behind these walls. Not many of us get to escape the way you did.”

“From Philashington,” I nodded knowingly. “I wanted to see what it was like outside the walls.”

“Every so often they gave us a sightseeing ride through the city, sometimes even out into the country. The idea is that we’re supposed to come back here feeling better and so try harder to make babies.”

“Yeah, hey.”

He tch-tched. “I surely do wish I was off desk duty. Seeing you in that plastidress makes my blood bubble.”

“How sweetly you put it.”

“Oh, I think up plenty of remarks, sitting here hour after hour.”

“Haven’t you got a secretary?” I asked.

“What’s a secretary?”

I cursed my dumbheadedness that seemed bound to get me into goof trouble. I said brightly, “We had a desk sergeant like you in Philashington. He wanted female com-

panionship all the time, too. So he said that he needed a girl companion to—er—examine any female applicants who came to seek admission.”

“He did, hey? And did he get one?”

“Why not? Of course, he never got any applicants at all, but this made no difference. Some time he *might* get a girl applicant, so he really ought to be ready for her.”

“Say, I’m going to do that,” he exclaimed.

“Especially since I’m here and you can’t examine me. You really ought to have a girl to do that.”

His baby blues went up my shapely legs in the clinging plastic, circled around my loins, touching all the bases, then slid up to my navel and my rather bounteous breasts. The boy had a thing for mammary glands, judging by the way he involuntarily pursed his mouth.

“You might be carrying weapons,” he said softly.

“Why, that’s right. I might be.”

“You aren’t, are you?”

“Certainly not! But then, you really don’t believe me, do you? I might be lying like crazy.”

He scratched his head. “I can’t imagine why you’d have a weapon. Nobody ever carries weapons in here. Even if you had one, who would you use it on?”

This boy was dense.

I settled things for him by raising my arms above my head and saying brightly, “Oh all right, you’ve twisted my arm. So take off my clothes and search me.”

The light dawned. His eyes got big and his grin split his handsome face. He came toward me, his stare fastened on the transparent plastic bubbles behind which were my naked breasts. His palms went to my sides and ran up them slowly, tenderly.

His kiss burned my lips. His hands busied themselves at the attachments of the rainbow-hued and plastic garment. It opened down my back. I was nude from the top of my head to the creases of my plump little buttocks, in

back. His palms went all over my flesh, gently and caressingly.

I melted against him.

His hands were on my buttocks, fondling them. His palms made love circles over their smooth surfaces. I moaned a little, enjoying the moment. This made the future well worth while. It was such a contrast to the way the unisexes lived.

Then the front of my garment was falling away and my breasts jutted at him, round and white, with big dark nipples standing up. He began to make crooning noises in his throat. He goggled at my globes, he lifted his hands and ran his fingertips gently all over them.

My knockers tingled all over.

"I'm not hiding anything there," I managed to gasp.

"Never can tell," he muttered.

Well, maybe.

His lips came down to my breasts slopes, ran all around them, back and forth and up and down. My nipples ached, they were so stiff. His fingers were beneath my heavy breasts, gently lifting them, shaking them slightly so that he made me know I was a woman.

His tongue slid out to lap.

I yelped in delight, and tried to crowd more of my breastflesh into his munching mouth. He was shaking all over, he was as much in need of me as I was of him.

"It's a good thing Talnov Kuyzen isn't here," I whispered. "This would just about finish him."

"It's damn near finishing me," he grunted.

His lips enclosed my right nipple. They began to work gently, like those of a hungry infant. I didn't know who taught love techniques here, but they were doing all right. This boy knew his way around a female body.

My left nipple wanted his mouth. I gave it to him. He had me up on my tiptoes, dancing about and rubbing my thighs together. A bit of plastic had wedged itself between

my legs and the chafing added to my delighted discomfort)

"Can't we?" I whimpered.

"There's no bed.

"You have a desk," I pointed out.

He lifted his head and stared at me. His surprise was almost grotesque. "A desk? Nobody ever makes love on a desk!"

"They do in the twenties—"

Whoops! I'd almost boo-boomed. I started all over again. "How do you think that desk attendant in Philashington manages?"

"Say, that's right! Even in a Philashington reception room, they wouldn't have a bed."

"You leave this to me," I told him with a smile.

I fiddled with his jacket, getting it off and down his arms. He had a deep, tanned chest, with some curly golden hairs on it. His arms were quite muscular. I pinched his bellyflesh to one side of his navel, then I hooked thumbs in his plasticine trousers and got them down.

His shorts went next.

His manhood thrust up at me in overwhelming pride. I giggled and slapped it gently, back and forth. It was his turn to moan. His hips were shaking all over.

I said, "Help me now."

My back was bare, so I turned around and showed it to him. He started kissing down my spine while his hands worked the rainbow stuff down off my rounded hips. His lips went downward onto my buttocks. He kissed them very tenderly, all over. I looked back at him over my shoulder and I watched as he went lower, down the backs of my thighs and to the soft flesh behind my knees.

I lifted a foot. He pulled the garment off. I raised the other leg, and then my sole covering was on the floor.

Gentle hands turned me. A soft mouth kissed up my leg and around to my front. I was gulping air at this point.

"The desk," I reminded him.

His arms went around my legs. He lifted me so that my belly was level with his mouth. He went on kissing me as he carried me. I felt like the queen of the Nile. He lowered me. My behind felt the coldness of the desk, then the wood warmed under my flesh.

Evorn Ambol was a lover boy.

He was in no hurry. He kissed my thighs, he parted them. He bent far forward and began to perform the mouth congress of the Hindu erotologists. My behind wriggled around on the desk until I damn near fell off.

I put my hands on his blond head.

My hands kept him at his *dulce opus*.

Then he straightened and lunged. I yelled with happiness as I took him deep. My bare legs tightened about his lean hips. My hips started to swing lazily, around and around.

Evorn Ambol put his arms about me. He rocked back and forth in a spasmodic stabbing that went on and on. My own arms were locked about his chest so I could maintain my position on the edge of the desk. Ecstasy burst inside me, again and again.

He was gasping, choking. He shook as if with the ague, but it was a delightful kind of shaking, because it meant that he was bursting his own cloud, as the Chinese put it. He wailed and jerked and went on shaking for quite a while.

When he was done, he sank to his knees, then rolled over onto his side. I stared down at him, dombfounded. He was sound asleep.)

How about that? I decided that the men and women of the Mating Huts were conditioned only to create children. After they finished their coupling, they just went to sleep. No seconds, and forget thirds and fourths!

I slid off the desk and looked around me. There was a bank of lights and levers set into the wall to the left of the desk. There were numbers and symbols in red on black

beneath the tiny lights. It took me a couple of seconds to realize that the lights, when turned on, indicated that a rut hut was in use.

The lights did not stay on very long. I shook my head gloomily. Somebody was going to have to do something about this. Making love wasn't just a matter of procreation. There was tenderness to be shared, a meeting of souls as well as bodies. The somebody was me, I decided.

But before I could help anybody, I had to get inside. I went to Evorn Ambol and shook his shoulder.

"Is it time to go?" he murmured sleepily.

"For me, it is. Come on, lover boy. On your feet."

His eyelids rose. He stared at me a moment before memory came to help him. He flushed with embarrassment and put a hand on the desk, helping himself upright.

"I'm guilty of a dereliction of duty!" he gasped.

"If you can forget it, I will," I smiled. "But don't you think I ought to go inside?"

"Oh my, yes."

He ran around to his chair, sat down and began to punch buttons in the electronic bank. More lights flashed on and off. He leaned back and looked at me.

"There, it's done. I've registered you. Now you'll be taken into the Preparation Ward and made presentable for," and his hand picked up the plastic card at which he stared disgustedly, "for this one."

"Do you arrange for the—er—matings?"

He nodded gloomily. "If I could, I'd save you for myself, but these electronic orders are recorded in the Central Office, where they're constantly being checked.

"If I were to keep you for myself, or if I were to give you to a man who wasn't in line to get you, I'd be punished."

"I wouldn't want that to happen."

"Thank you," He stared at the card in his hand. "But this one! Tcha!" He shoved the card into a slot in the electronic bank with a shudder.

"How come you aren't pushing more cards into slots? I keep seeing room lights go on and off. That means couples are occupying them, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I got that part of my job done long ago. You're a new one, you don't have any partner, so I have to furnish one."

He sighed and shook his head. "I'll have to let you go, now. I can't keep you here forever, much as I'd like to."

His finger pressed a button. A door opened. I walked forward, bent to kiss Evorn Ambol. Then I straightened up and marched myself toward the long metallic corridor that opened up to my stare for what seemed to be miles. I'd taken about five steps when a small hover-car swooshed down the corridor toward me. It stopped and I got in.

The hover-car took me to a large white room where three men and three women were waiting for me. They wore what seemed to be absolutely shapeless grey garments that reached to their ankles. Those garments were about as sexy as a hard-boiled egg.

I goggled a little at the males. Each of them was in a state of semi-excitement, to judge by the bulges at their groins, visible even through the drab grey of their garments. I thought at first that the male doctors and the lady nurses had been fooling around to while away the time, but it wasn't that way at all. Just the opposite, really.

Later I was to learn that the unisexes put drugs in the food allotments fed to the men and women in the Mating Huts. These drugs were designed to keep their sexual hungers at a minimum. However, these six people in the medical rooms were thrown into daily contact far more than other men and women, so it had been easy for them to fall in love.

They were conditioned to satisfy their sex hunger only in the rut huts, like Evorn Ambol. The doctors and the nurses saw each other all the time, they did nothing to al-

leviate their normal wants, so they walked around with the perpetual hots. When I looked at the nurses, I really didn't blame the doctors.

The nurses were dolls. One was a redhead, one a blonde, the other a brunette with hair falling to her shoulders. Despite the face that each woman wore those shapeless garments, you could see that these girls were stacked, with plump, big breasts and shapely legs. Their hips were neatly rounded and looked soft as harem cushions.

"Hi there," I exclaimed.

Not until now did I realize that I had forgotten to put on my rainbow-hued and plastic outfit. I was mother naked. The doctors looked at me and their manhoods reacted cordially. I felt complimented. I giggled and looked from one to the other.

The youngest doctor said, "The info card says you're an escapee from Philashington."

"Right the first time. I got tired of those dull old rut huts. I wanted to see the outside world."

The middle-aged doctor said, "A shame. The Earth needs all the babies the huts can produce."

"We think the rut huts are exciting," said the other younger doctor, rather primly. He had a habit of looking down his nose at you, I noticed.

I said, looking from the doctors to the nurses. "I like a little variety with my loving. It makes for better relations. And babies are conceived faster."

It was a wild stab in the dark, though it was based on reason. Having babies is not just a matter of sex relations. There has to be some pleasure, as well. These poor characters in the Mating Huts copulated as a matter of sheer duty. No wonder the authorities had to keep them in eternal readiness.

The older doctor looked interested "What do you mean? Babies come when the male semen enters the re-

ceptive female womb. It is not a matter of better relations, at all."

"Want to bet? That's the trouble with your thinking. It's too hide-bound. You think along the lines laid down by the unisexes long ago. And the unisexes hate you sexed-up people. They make you wear uniforms like those, that are definitely not designed to keep you sexually excited, but you can't do anything about it."

"You're a rebel," said the brunette nurse, thoughtfully. "Sometimes I've had dreams about making babies someplace other than the rut huts. Once I dreamed I was out in the open air with Doctor Thagdorn and—"

The middle-aged doctor gasped.

"Anthara, remember where you are! This sort of thing has no place in the Preparation Ward."

"What about that?" I asked, pointing to his bulging attraction.

Anthara smiled and asked, "Yes, how about that?"

"Go ahead, honey," I told her.

"I wouldn't dare!"

I moved with a swinging motion of my hips toward Doctor Thagdorn. My hand went out and my fingernails started scratching. The good doctor shivered and looked at me helplessly.

"Does anybody know what goes on in here?" I wondered.

"Certainly not," said Thagdorn.

"Then nobody but you six would ever know if you took time off to ball one another, would they?"

(The blonde nurse came across the room to one of the young doctors and plastered her front against him. She lifted her pretty mouth for a kiss.

I stepped behind her when I saw the horrified look her medical man was giving her. I put my hands on her hips and swung them gently.]

"Like this, honey," I told her.

"Ooooooh," she went.

[The doctor gasped. His reflex muscles overcame his scruples. His lean hips rammed right back at his golden-haired girl friend. He was getting very excited. Hell, he had been very excited just looking at me. His hands came down onto her hips and worked them the way I had done.

He kissed the blonde nurse.

Anthara held up her hand to me. "I'll take over, thank you." She walked up to Doctor Thagdorn and caught hold of him in both her hands. She blew a kiss at him with her pouting red lips.]

"Olos, darling," she breathed. "You want me very much. We've never been lucky enough to meet in the rut huts. And we've always been too stupid to do anything anywhere else.

"I'm going to have you, Olos. Right here and now. Let the others watch, if they want. I don't care. Do you?"

"Hell, no," he growled and put his big hands on her behind, bringing her in close.

I looked at the redhead who was staring with big green eyes at four of her working companions. Her tonguetip came out to lick around her mouth. From Doctor Thagdorn and Anthara, her stare went to the young doctor who was standing with his *peos* tilted like Don Quixote's lance about to ram a windmill.

The redhead sighed. The young doctor managed to say, "I ought to report what's going on here, but the hell with it. Thenna, I've had the rut huts for you ever since you came to work here."

"Me too, Bentos. But—"

The young doctor looked to me for help. "Where?" he asked, glancing at Thagdorn and Anthara, at the other young doctor and the blonde nurse. These four were just standing there, rubbing bellies. I looked around the room.

"Over here," I brightened, remembering Evorn Ambol.

[I made the doctor remove his garment, then sit down on the chair. I gestured the redhead to strip and to straddle his hips. She gave me a grateful look, took what she

wanted in her gentle hand, and guided it to her flesh. She sank down slowly. The doctor damn near screeched with delight.

The redhead started bouncing up and down.

The other four were all eyes, watching.

Doctor Thagdorn said, "I never heard of anybody doing that, *that* way. It's very interesting." He added hastily, "Educational, too, of course."

"Neither have I," murmured Anthara hopefully. "If there were another chair here, I'd like to try it, myself."

I looked around the room. "Well, we do have a stool, over here. It's a little high, but I think we can overcome that handicap with a little thought."

They ran for the stool, tossing their shapeless garments to one side. Doctor Thagdorn perched himself on it and Anthara mounted the stool, and then his maleness. The brunette was an unsteady rider, so I stepped forward.

"Loop your legs around the stool," I advised. "Fasten your ankles in the rungs."

She nodded and slid her legs forward, missing a beat or two. Then her feet dug in and she gasped with sudden understanding. A delighted smile broke out on her face. Her backside began to joggle gelatinously as she posted up and down.

Her arms slid around the doctor and she kissed him with parted lips. I heard them both moaning in their delirium of delight.

I looked at the other young doctor and the blonde nurse. They were staring back at me, having already removed their sacklike clothes, hoping I'd be able to do something about their plight. And they were in a plight, all right. The doctor was as aroused as a man can get, and his blonde lovely was beating her pale white hips against the air helplessly.

The room was no help. The chair and the stool were being occupied. I asked, "Don't you have an obstetric

table? You know, the kind with metal stirrups for the woman to rest her heels on while she's being examined?"

The blonde squealed, "Hendon! The next room!"

[They ran ahead of me. The blonde perched her behind on the black cushion and lay back. Her shapely white legs came up so she could plant her heels in the stirrups.

The doctor came between her thighs and pushed.

She wailed out her pleasure.]

I left them, closing the door gently behind them. I looked at the chair and the stool. I sighed. It looked like I was odd girl.

So I paced up and down for about an hour, wondering how in the world I was going to catch the attention of Anders Orion. In the Mating Hut, I was as good as a prisoner. If I should escape from here, my female body would be all the proof anyone would need to know I didn't belong in the outside world.

It was my job to kill him, but I hadn't the faintest idea as to how I was going to lay eyes on Anders Orion, much less a bullet or whatever they used in 3693 to kill folks. I had my orders, though. Search out the Tyron of Earth and destroy him.

Maybe these doctors and nurses would know a way. In gratitude for what I'd done for them, they might help me get away and find Anders Orion.

On the contrary, as it turned out.

When Doctor Thagdorn and Anthara finished with each other, about two and a half hours later, they both turned to me with happy faces.

Anthara said, "You will be very welcome here."

"Indeed you will," chimed in her lover. "I'm going to put you in charge of the rut huts."

"Now wait a darn minute," I said.

Thagdorn raised his right hand. "Look what you've done for us, here in the Preparation Ward." His face beamed at me. "We won't be standing around here for

hours on end, not knowing what to do with ourselves any more."

"Indeed we won't," nodded the brunette, licking her lips.

The others were dismounting, by this time. The red-head clung to her Bentos, an arm about his waist. Her green eyes shone at me. "We're ever so grateful, I don't understand why we never thought of it."

"You've been brainwashed," I told them. "You people in the Mating Huts have been playing at sex according to rules laid down by the ones who hate sex—the unisexes.

"They don't want you to have any fun when you create babies. They're out to make it as much of a job as sex is possible to be. You do it only in beds in the rut huts. You don't get to feel good about it, you don't even look forward to it. Except maybe in a couple of isolated cases."

I was thinking of Evorn Ambol when I said that; he was a true lover boy. But most of the folks inside the Mating Hut were just like these doctors and nurses. They had a job to do, this was the only reason they were kept alive, to make babies for mankind.

Bentos was nodding, faintly smiling.

"Yes, you're right. The rules were laid down when they built the huts, over a hundred years ago. The unisexes naturally were the rule-makers. They hated the sexed people. They didn't want them to have a ball in here, they just wanted children. You can change all that. You must be one of those natural lovers, as you mentioned."

I nodded, not daring to tell him I was from the past, where people enjoyed their sex because it was an integral part of their very nature. Let them think me a rebel; it was safer.

My main job was to get out of here and kill Anders Orion. I needed time in which to work out some sort of plan. First of all, I had to learn more about this world of 3693. I could do that in the Mating Hut.

So I said with a bright smile, "I'll be happy to stay on and act as program instructor."

Doctor Thagdorn murmured, "None of this must get out of the Mating Hut, you understand. We don't want the unisexes to hear that we're all having a ball."

A buzzer sent what sounded like a Bronx cheer throughout the Preparation Ward. Anthara moved toward the intercom.

"Has the escapee reported?" asked a metallic voice.

I recognized the voice as belonging to Evorn Ambol. The poor boy is torn with jealousy, I told myself. He said, "She should have checked into Rut Hut 4738 by this time. Or do you find her unsatisfactory?"

"No, no," said Doctor Thagdorn. "We have just concluded the tests." He added acidly, "I didn't know there was any rush about her case."

"There isn't. I was just curious."

"You go back to monitoring the reception room, Evorn. We can handle our affairs nicely, thank you. Without interference."

The intercom went dead.

The blonde nurse shrugged. "Poor dear. It's such a lonely life, being in the reception room. Nobody ever comes to get recepted—if that's the right word."

"Except me," I said brightly.

"You're the first one I ever knew that came here from the outside world," muttered Bentos. "The very first, in a hundred years." His face became interested. "How did you do it?"

"I escaped from Philashington. Tell you about it sometime."

Doctor Thagdorn was sitting on a bench, writing on a card. He said, "I'm supposed to put you in Rut Hut 4738 with a young male named Thintor Krumm. I think that can wait. I'll put through a reversal order and a hold."

"I'm not too tired," I said bravely. I remembered Evorn Ambol's regret at my getting the man named

Thintor Krumm. If I were going to have a problem with him, I would just as soon wait, at that. I was a mite sleepy-eyed, I admit.

"Anthara, take Eve to the slumber chambers," directed Doctor Thagdorn. As Anthara nodded and moved across the room toward a blue door, the good doctor eyed her swinging haunches. He said softly, "And hurry back, dear."

It began to look as if I'd started a trend.

I walked with Anthara—she'd slipped into her shapeless uniform by this time—along a couple of corridors.

"The slumber rooms are all on the lower floors," she explained. "These rooms have blue doors. The rut huts have red doors. The medical rooms have white doors, the dining rooms are green. That way you can't go wandering in to disturb somebody who might not wish to be disturbed."

She opened a blue door. I stepped into a small cubicle with a bed, a writing desk and chair, an easy chair. There was wall-to-wall blue carpeting underfoot, and a couple of restful oil paintings on the wall. A glass screen had been set into the wall. Naturally, being from the twentieth century, I figured it was a television set.

There was no need to slip out of my clothes. I wasn't wearing any. I raised eyebrows at the brunette girl who nodded and told me garments would be ready for me when I was ready to wear them. I crawled naked between the sheets.

I woke to the rumble of my stomach that told me I was almost starving to death. I slid out of bed and opened a closet door. A long, shapeless white garment hung there. A pair of boots rested on the floor beneath it. They looked as if they had been designed by an old maid aunt who hated womanhood.

"Yech," I said.

I took down the white shroud and examined it. My eyes closed in sheer desperation. Rather than wear this

thing, I would go naked. What the hell! I was in a Mating Hut, wasn't I?

Then I started to get stubborn. The unisexes didn't want anybody to have any fun, hey? I took the garment over to the solitary window in my cubicle and studied it more closely. With a needle and thread, I might work wonders with this thing.

My hands gripped it. I ripped.

Then I started searching for a needle and thread. I didn't find any, but I did find an intercom. I threw the switch.

"Emergency central," a voice said.

"I need scissors, a needle and some different colored thread," I said. "The sooner, the better."

"Your request has been codified."

The voice went away. About ten seconds later there was a little click in a metal section just below the glass screen built into the wall. I walked over, lifted the metal lid. There was a scissors, needle and some spools of differently colored thread in the receptacle.

I went to work. I shortened the shroud so it became a micro-skirt. I sewed a wide vee in the middle of the damn thing, down to my navel so it would show the inner slopes of my breasts.

"With apologies to Yves St. Laurent and Ceil Chapman," I muttered.

I put the dress on. I had tightened it, made it fit like a second skin. I didn't look too unappetizing, I decided. I had no mirror, but a woman senses these things. Yeah, I would raise a couple of eyebrows when I paraded into the dining hall.

I looked at the shoes. I could not wear them, not the way they were, like boots. I got the scissors and cut away the imitation leather until I had a not ungainly sandal of sorts. It showed my bare feet, even a part of my pretty little toes. I retained a strip of fake leather to fasten it on.

Eve Drum was about to make her grand entrance.

I walked down the corridor until I found a green door. I pushed it open. The many tables were filled with men and women in the white shrouds. I thought for a minute I was in a monastery.

Forks and knives clattered. Somebody knocked over a glass. Heads turned and bodies shifted. Nobody even breathed, except maybe me as I strolled forward casually, smiling and nodding at the still white faces all around me.

The men looked at my legs, visible from the upper parts of my thighs to my hand-changed sandals. They goggled at the low, wide vee of my garment, holding their breaths in case my breasts fell out. I proceeded as casually as I could amid the barrage of those stares to an ordering panel.

I pressed studs below signs I could not read.

I was too excited to eat. Well, almost. I didn't look at what I was ordering. I was the target of all eyes. Admiring eyes in the males, jealous eyes of the females. I let my hips wiggle and made my shoulders shake very slightly.

I put on a show.

And they loved it.

Forks and knives began to bang against the glassware. Voices shouted their delight at what they were seeing. I grabbed the platters that came out of the food chute. I looked around for a table.

Fifty men rose to their feet, offering to make room for me. I walked toward a big, husky man and plunked my plates down in front of him.

I lifted a fork and stuck it in a bowl of cereal.

"Ech," I said.

My smile dazzled the big man across the way from me. He pushed his platter of sizzling grilled steak at me. "Take mine. Please! It would be an honor. And then tell me who you are so I can ask for your hut next time I go on rut call."

I nodded and reached for a knife.

"Won't I be taking your food? I mean, I don't want you to starve. And—the name is Eve Drum."

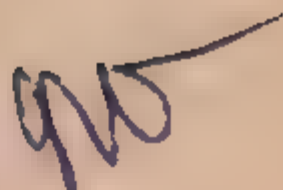
"I love cereal," he said bravely, grabbing a spoon.

We ate in a silence that was like a fog around us. I don't think anybody else ate at all. Half the folks were standing, gawking, trying to get a better look at me.

A voice said, "Eve Drum, you are under arrest!"

I went on eating. The steak was delicious.

CHAPTER FOUR



The big man across from me put down his spoon. His face looked stricken.

"Im sorry, but I must bring you in," he said lamely. "I'm a guardian. The guardian closest to the person being arrested must act at once. It's a law of the Mating Huts."

I chewed my steak.

I said, after I swallowed, "I agree with you. It is your job. The only trouble is, you don't know my name. I never told it to you. Did I?"

I flashed him a sexy smile. His eyes got big and he began to grin. "Say, that's right. If I don't know your name, I certainly can't arrest you."

He began eating his cereal with a lot more pleasure. From time to time, he chuckled. He said again, "It isn't often we humans get to stand up and defy the unisexes. This is something I'll always remember."

"Do the unisexes have a man in control here?"

"No. We report them."

"Why?" I asked.

His eyes got big again. "Because it is the law."

"The law of the unisexes. If you did not report to them, what could they do? A unisex gets sick at the

mere thought of entering this place. It ought to be easy to overpower them."

"They would cut off your food supply," he said grimly. That would be a problem.

I said, "I've got to think about this. There must be something we can do. In the meantime, suppose you take me on a little tour of your kitchens."

"There is little to see, just a lot of tubes. The food is stored in energiboxes in the form of electronic energy. As a signal goes from the ordering board, this electronic energy is changed into matter and relayed along to the pick-up panels."

"Where do the energy boxes come from?"

"They're delivered here by trucks."

And idea began to swim around in my head. Those delivery trucks might be my magic carpet to get me out of the Mating Hut. It would be worth a try, anyhow.

The intercom said, "Eve Drum, you are under arrest! All Guardians are hereby directed to bring her to the Control Room."

The man across from me looked worried. He had been trained for his job. All his life had been directed toward this one moment, to make an arrest upon an order. I felt sorry for him.

The steak and salad were gone. I leaned forward, whispering, "Go ahead, arrest me. We might as well get it over with," I added thoughtfully. "But how did anyone know I was wearing this different dress?"

"Toadies," snapped the big man. "Spies of the management."

I nodded and stood up. "Let's go."

The big man walked with me the length of the dining hall. Everybody was still staring at me, but now there was pity mixed in with their adoration. We marched down a corridor to a striped door. When the door slid back, I saw an elevator waiting for us.

The elevator let us out at the fifteenth floor.

A guard of men in military-type uniforms met us at the wide doorway into the control room. Their eyes goggled at sight of my revamped dress. One of them pursed his lips to whistle, then thought better of it. The uniformed men grouped themselves around me and marched me in through the doorway to a round room fitted with a dais and a semi-circular counter where five men and five women sat staring at me.

One of the men said, "Is this the woman named Eve Drum? If it is, where did she get that dress she wears?"

"I made it," I said brightly.

I walked forward, looking up at one of the women. I said, "Don't you ever get tired of those bags you're forced to wear? I did, so I cut this down to size. If we had better materials than this, we could make ourselves nice-looking clothes."

The man yelled, "You are out of order! Be silent!"

I ignored him, staring up at the woman, "You could shorten your clothes, you could make them pretty—to set off your own beauty."

The women nodded almost in reflex. I knew my humanity. No woman ever born would be happy with those shapeless sacks they were compelled to don. There was sympathy and understanding in every female eye. I felt sure of their vote.

I turned to the men. Two of them had wolfish looks in their eyes as they stared at my legs and half my bared chest. They had never seen anything like this. I wondered how the women dressed inside the rut huts, and reflected that partial nudity is always more exciting than complete nakedness.

To the men I said, "You males must resent the fact that you're ordered to dress like women."

The men winced. I had struck a sore spot, all right. I went on more confidently, "In the outer world, the uni-sexes wear very pretty garments. I appreciate the fact that you are kept inside the Mating Huts like prisoners. This is

no reason why you have to go around like monks, however. You have as much right as the unisexes to wear colorful garments."

One of the men said, "That makes sense."

The man who had first begun to question me pounded on a wooden disc with a gavel. "Silence! I demand silence. This conduct is outrageous."

When nobody spoke, he went on more calmly. "Your record shows you to be an escapee from Philashington, Eve Drum. That record has been verified by the Philashington Mating Hut."

I was a little stunned by this, until I realized that The Sisters would have prepared for this. A man like Talnov Kuyzen would have foreseen this.

"It is not my intention to inquire into the facts of your escape. Sufficient for us here in New Yorkon that you are now a resident member of our Hut. But you have violated a rule of the Mating Hut. You have altered your costume."

"And why not?" I asked pertly.

"It is a rule of order," he said stiffly.

"Imposed on you by the unisexes," I pointed out.

"They are your captors. These orders are their orders."

The spokesman said, "That is not true!"

"It is true, and you know it. You do nothing without the consent of the unisexes. They hate you, they are jealous of you. I know, I've been outside."

The five men and five women of the Control Board stared at each other. One of the women leaned forward, asking, "Is this so, what you have said? I know that we make reports to them, we have always done so."

"But they never send a unisex here to check on you—because they get physically ill at sight of a real man and woman."

"Yes," said a man slowly. "They never come here, except for the food energy deliveries, of course. Even then,

they do not enter the Mating Hut, they just slip the energy boxes into the chutes."

"You could make up your own reports, and nobody would know," I commented. "So why not enjoy the life you must lead? Why not put on pretty clothes, rather than those unsightly bags? A man should dress like a man, a woman like a woman."

The spokesman, an older man with greying hair, tried to keep the reins of the meeting tight. He said, "This is anarchy!"

Two of his fellow men shook their heads. One said, "The woman named Eve Drum makes sense. I, for one, have always resented these garments we wear. Why, even in some of the rut huts—"

He broke off, eyes widening. His mouth broke into a grin. He said, "I would like to see a girl I know wear a dress something like yours. I think I would appreciate the times when I visit her far more than I do right now."

"Amgon Kilster!" shouted the spokesman. "You're out of order. I refuse to recognize—"

"Kilster is right," growled another man.

The women were huddled, heads together, leaning on the curved desk. One of them nodded, then turned to face the spokesman.

"We women are agreed. We shall vote to alter our garments the same way that this brave girl has altered her own. We are going to form a seamstress corps to consider the matter. If Eve Drum would act as our consultant, we'd be happy to have her as part of our program."

I beamed in delight. I was going to be one busy girl in the Mating Hut. I was going to be in charge of the rut huts, and now I was also going to be a fashion consultant. Things were getting a little out of hand.

I said, "I'd be happy to."

The spokesman was sputtering, but apparently he was the only one who was in favor of punishing me. The other four men were smiling down at me.

One man said to the spokesman, "We four vote with the woman, Hanthol Phan. You are alone in your stand, if you decide to persist in it. Eve Drum will be honored, not punished. It's about time we true human beings began standing up for our rights."

Hanthol Phan looked startled. He looked at me, then at his fellow Control Board members. For a moment I thought he was going to cry. He drew a deep breath, instead.

"Very well. I am overruled. I shall then cast my vote as you have done, to honor Eve Drum. Perhaps I am too old. What we have always done, at the bidding of the unisexes, has been my way of life.

"It may be time to change all that. We shall have new clothes, all of us. I so order it. As for the reports to the outer world, nothing of this must be allowed to leak out. Our reports will continue as if nothing has happened."

His gavel hit the wooden disc.

The meeting was over. The women filed down the steps and came to surround me. The men followed at a distance. I chatted about styles in the outer world, and threw in what I remembered about clothes designed by the fashion setters of my own twentieth century.

We spent hours just yakking.

The female board members called in expert seamstresses and I explained to them what we wanted. The seamstresses wept with delight. They assured us that they would begin work immediately.

"What about the men?" asked the youngest seamstress.

"Tyrolean shorts and shirts," I smiled.

I had to draw pictures before the seamstresses understood. Once they got the idea, they were bursting with approval. They ran off chattering among themselves.

I said to one of the women, "I would like to speak with Hanthol Phan. I have a couple of other improvements in mind for the Mating Hut."

"Such as?"

"Permanent attachments between certain men and women," I said, remembering the way the doctors and their nurses had paired off. "I want to learn about the birth rate figures, too."

The woman looked puzzled. "What birth rate?"

"What birth rate? The babies born here! I want to know how many there are a month, per week, things like that. For a Mating Hut this large, there must be hundreds of babies born every year. Maybe even thousands."

"I don't believe so," she said hesitantly.

"Hey, what gives here?" I asked the women.

They could not help me. As far as they could recall, they had never seen a pregnant woman, let alone a baby. There was something very fishy in this Denmark, I told myself. Talnov Kuyzen had assured me that the Mating Huts were for the purpose of continuing the human race. Apparently this was not the case at all.

I wanted to see Hanthol Phan more than ever.

The old man came to see me in the big lounge on the Hut Deck where I was to be stationed. He walked slowly, as if he had aged overnight, and his hand, as he waved me a faint greeting, actually trembled.

I stood up out of respect for his age and rank. He smiled and gestured for me to sit down again. He sat down beside me and his eyes studied me carefully.

Almost softly, he said, "You are not of us, my dear. I don't know where you come from, but you aren't a thirty-seventh century woman."

His hand gestured me to silence. "No one but myself guesses at this. I shall keep silent, not knowing your mission or what it portends, but from what I have already seen and heard about you, I know it is for the good of all humanity."

I kept silent, remembering I was to slay Anders Orion.

"So then. With that out of the way, we shall talk. I ask no questions, except one. What can I do to help you?"

"Show me your birth rate figures."

"Ahh," he breathed softly. "Then you know."

"I don't know anything. Not really. I'm just guessing. The women board members told me they never see a pregnant woman, or a baby."

"Nor have they," he said with a gentle smile.

"Then no babies are born?"

"Yes, a few. They are taken away."

"By whom?"

"The Tyron. Anders Orion."

I gulped. In a small voice, I said, "Oh! He kills the human babies, and permits the unisex ones to live."

Hanthol Phan spread his hands. "I honestly cannot say what happens to the babies. All I know is, his army men come for them. What happens to them is beyond my province. My job here is to make sure that as soon as a girl is adjudged pregnant, she is taken above the fiftieth floor.

"Nobody but certain personnel is allowed that high up. There are maternity wards there. The babies are delivered. They and their mothers are never seen again."

"And the birth rate?"

He shook his head. "Very small. Very small indeed. I do not understand it, at all."

"I think I do," I muttered grimly.

His grey eyebrows arched. "Understand what, my dear?"

"Everybody in here is being doped. Given saltpeter, or its equivalent, to cut down their sexual urges. Naturally, the sex urge will break out here and there, a man and woman will join together and produce a baby, despite all the unisexes can do.

"If things were normal you should be having a hell of a lot more babies than you do in a Mating Hut this size, that must accommodate—how many people?"

"More than five-hundred thousand."

"And how many babies did you have last year?"

"Seventeen," he said heavily.

"See what I mean?"

He sat there with a face that seemed turned to ashen stone. He was thinking, remembering. He was adding facts and figures and getting an answer he didn't like.

Finally he nodded. "I can test for drugs. I have a staff of extremely competent scientists. All humans, real men and women." He said somewhat indignantly, "We are not the cattle you seem to think us. The unisexes never bother us if we want to pursue knowledge. It's only—only about babies that they restrict us, apparently."

"And why not? If you had the normal birth rate here, in a few years you'd overflow the Mating Huts and take over command of the planet. That's why they keep you so isolated, because deep in their hearts they're afraid of you."

He looked shocked at my words. He thought some more. "It may be, yes. What you say makes sense. But from a strictly biological viewpoint, why are there so many unisexes? They cannot reproduce. The only way that the unisexes can continue is for them to select unisexed babies from the babies born in the Mating Huts. There must be a number of them born to normal parents, as a result of genes harmed by the dust plague of more than a hundred years ago."

"I didn't see anybody at all in the streets when Talnov Kuyzen brought me here in a hover-car. nobody. We could have been the only people alive."

Hanthol Phan became excited. "We never see anyone in the streets, either. Could it be that there are very few unisexes left? And they keep us humans here as captives because we far outnumber them?"

"It adds up," I murmured.

The old man stood up. His fists were clenched, quivering. He raised them high above his head, shaking them.

"By the Plague! If I could be sure this is the case—I would order every man out into the streets!"

"Be patient," I smiled. "You would have the Tyron

and his army to deal with. They would force you back inside here. Right now the thing to do is prepare for the day when Anders Orion dies. The army will be disunited. It may be safe then to come out."

He nodded and sat down. "I have grown old in the Mating Hut, I do not think as does a young person. I will be guided by you, Eve Drum. I would do anything to see real men and women inhabit the Earth once more."

"Analyze the energy foods that come here."

"At once," he agreed.

I told him about the doctors and nurses. I concluded by saying, "They want me to help them plan the sex rites in the rut huts, to change them so as to make it a pleasure and not a task for a man and a woman to unite in them."

"It shall be done. Nor will it go into the reports. These things shall be our secret."

"One more thing. I'm supposed to enter a rut hut with somebody named Thintor Krumm. I'd like to be excused from that duty. I have so many other tasks to perform, right now."

"That may be impossible," he said. "You see, that is the one thing that is monitored by the unisexes. I believe Evorn Ambol placed your identification disc in the selector slot. Once that is done, it sets up contact with the unisex control center.

"They know that Eve Drum and Thintor Krumm will be together in the rut hut. As a matter of fact, you should have been united by this time." He waved a hand. "I can get around that, I can say you were too exhausted mentally and physically to enter a rut hut. But I can't postpone it indefinitely."

I crossed my legs, frowning. "All right, I'll go through with it. Besides, I have a vague desire to see this Thintor Krumm."

The older man smiled. "He is very young. He works in the kitchens, you know, doing manual labor. He has

never been in a rut hut before. I think he dreads it as much as you."

A male virgin? I wondered, remembering how disgusted Evorn Ambol had been with his choice. If he worked in the kitchens, however, he might be able to tell me a few things I wanted to know.

Hanthol Phan said, "Very well." He glanced at a chronometer on a chain about his neck. "It is now the fifteenth hour. We shall eat in two hours, the evening meal. Perhaps after that? Or would you prefer to wait until tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow morning," I decided. "What do I do?"

"The controller will inform you." He stood up, looking down at me kindly. "Is there anything you'd like to do between now and then?"

I wanted something very much. I tried to frame my words carefully "I've always liked history. In Philashington I never did get the chance to study it as much as I liked. Do you have a . . ."

"Historial? Of course. One of the finest on the Earth. Come with me. I'll show it to you."

We went up and down more corridors, two elevators, until we emerged on the forty-seventh floor. The historial was a series of muted chambers, heavily draped, equipped with wires that dangled from the ceiling and ended in a metal cup that looked not unlike a skullcap. The chairs themselves were heavily cushioned.

"You sit down, put on a synthimentometer, and relax," Hanthol Phan explained. "The machines do all the rest."

I selected a chair, sat down and relaxed. Hanthol Phan did the honors, placing the metal cup on my head. Then he threw a switch.

My jaw dropped. My eyes popped open.

I was seeing mental pictures, sort of like having a moving picture screen right inside my skull. A voice spoke softly to me. Later I learned that the synthimentometer directly affects the imaginative sectors of the human

brain, feeding in pictures just as capably as any movie projector.

I saw men and women of my own time, there were some I recognized. I learned that the United States had pursued such a tortuous course through world affairs, once it got uninvolved in Viet Nam, that its people, tired of being the policemen of the world, chose instead to be its instructor.

The landing of men on the moon, those first steps taken by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, while Mike Collins circled overhead in the Columbia, were important, indeed. They changed the thinking of the world. Men seemed to forget they were American, British, French or Russian. They became Earthmen, first of all. And their eyes were directed toward outer space.

Except for Red China, that is. There was a Sino-Russian war during the early and middle years of the 1970's, in which Russia emerged victorious, but at a frightful cost of manpower. The Communist Party lost prestige and power, not only in its own countries, but in the world.

Atomic Power became a useful reality with the invention by a Belgian scientist of a bread box-sized atomic motor. It could be lugged about like a portable television set, though it weighed a lot more. Power came to life all over the globe. The living standards of every man, woman and child jumped skyward, even in the so-called disenfranchised areas.

Blacks and whites settled down to an uneasy truce at first that later, as more and more blacks took their places in education and big business, thanks to their improved educations, became true coexistence. Peace was not just a word, but a reality all over the globe.

And then the world population explosion became a thing of the deadliest danger. Countries like India and China suffered frightful famines. The Earth could not produce enough food to feed its many billions of people. The United States ate well enough, American know-how.

By this time there were an observatory and a small aluminum city on the moon with perhaps three thousand men and women living on it, of all nationalities, grouped together under an Earth flag designed and adopted by the United Nations.

Man went to Mars and found that much of its atmosphere was trapped below the surface, in a series of interlocked caves. Man went to Mars in spaceships, using the new gravity motors, and built cities under the surface. Men and women went out from Earth on a volunteer basis at first, until more than two million of them were Martian colonists.

Earth still had too many people, so a world lottery was instituted for those under twenty-five. A hundred million young couples went to Mars, and made it their home. By the year 3000, Earth had balanced its population problems, forced birth control having been instituted by the World State. There were some who had more than two children, but these were the men and women who lived on the fringework of civilization.

Most of the so-called civilized world consisted of gigantic cities. New Yorkon, Philashington, Chicatroit, Los Ancisco and many others. The rest of the country was a gigantic farm that produced fresh vegetables and raised cattle and pigs.

When the energicon was invented, which could turn matter into an energy mist and then convert it back into its original form, the dread of global famine was a thing of the past. Life became a Utopia on Earth.

Then the dust cloud that was to spread the de-sexing plague across the world swam into view. The Earth passed through it. The strange dust affected the genes and hormones of almost every man, woman and child on Earth. There was no more sex, except for some people who were immune to its effects. . . .

This is where I came in.

The metal cup went dead. I pulled it off and sat there,

thinking. Naturally enough, there was no mention of Anders Orion; for that, I would have to go into the room where they dispensed information on current affairs. I decided against it. My stomach was growling.

I walked into a dining hall.

Instantly, there was silence. Then everybody got up and began clapping. I blushed. Honest Injun, I just blushed. I fumbled my way to an ordering panel and examined the sigils carefully. I settled on soup, veal with melted parmesan cheese, and a wedge of huckleberry pie.

They were still clapping when I sat down.

Right away, I stood up again. I guess they wanted me to say something because the clapping stopped.

"Fellow humans, work is beginning on your new clothes. It's already begun, as a matter of fact. You ought to be seeing the new styles for both men and women in a couple of days."

I sat down and ate. The clapping faded off and everyone joined in the dinner hour. When they were done—everybody seemed to eat faster than I did—they crowded around and asked me questions.

Was I really an escapee? How had I managed it? Where had I gotten the brainstorm that had made me change my sack wrapper into an attractive garment? Did the authorities have any plans to leave the Mating Hut? Would the unisexes punish us for what we had done?

There were a lot more. These were the main ones. I answered them as best I could, between mouthfuls. The dinner hour stretched to midnight in the hall where I was sitting.

A small delegation escorted me to my sleeping cubicle. I blew everybody a kiss and shut the door. I yanked off my dress, kicked off my crude sandals, and fell onto the bed.

Eight hours later a voice woke me.

"Eve Drum! Eve Drum! You are scheduled for Rut

Hut Number 4738, at the eleventh hour. Please be on time. Eve Drum! Eve Drum! You are scheduled for . . .”

I shut off the intercom.

I put on my dress and went out to eat breakfast, settling for two cups of coffee. The clapping was not so great, now. They were getting used to me in the thirty-seventh century.

I glanced at the wall clock. It was almost the eleventh hour. I got up and went to find Rut Hut 4738. And Thintor Krumm.

CHAPTER FIVE

The rut hut was drab and unappetizing. Khaki curtains hung at the windows. A cot stood pushed against the wall. The floor was bare of any covering, and had been varnished a sickening purple. Even the sunlight coming in through the window looked a little sick. I realized, as I studied it, that this must be the work of the unisexes.

Not even a nymphomaniac would want to make love in such a place. It affected the nerves, the stomach, making me want to heave. No wonder there were so few babies born in the Mating Huts. I began to have serious doubts if even a small percentage of the men and women assigned to the rut huts indeed had any sexual relations at all.

This place was not for me.

I turned and opened the door. A husky young man was standing there, terror etched on his face. His eyes got large at sight of me, he sent a glance past my shoulder into the rut hut. He looked ill.

My palm came up to his chest and pushed.

"Out, my friend. We have business elsewhere."

He gulped, but he came when I crooked a finger at him and wriggled it. I asked, "You are Thintor Krumm, aren't

you? Yes, it figures. Nobody else would bother to go to a room like that."

"But we're supposed to," he protested weakly.

"Buster, you don't know what you're saying. Now come along with mama and I'll find a better spot to make whoopee."

We marched to the Control Room.

Every head turned toward us in horror. Men and women were sitting at the control banks, pressing studs and pushing levers. A woman with her hair pulled back in a bun at the nape of her neck got up and walked toward us determinedly.

"You're supposed to be in a rut hut," she squealed.

"We won't go into one of those dungeons," I told her pleasantly. "We absolutely refuse."

Her mouth opened. She gasped, shook herself, then said, "But you have to. It's—"

"I know, I know. It's the law. Who's going to make us?"

She was stopped cold. She looked around at the other technicians, helplessly. There was no provision in their laws for anything like this. Until now, they had been dealing with human sheep.

"Tell you what," I suggested. "Get a couple of men to help me move furniture around, to replace those ghastly curtains with something lively, throw a rug on the floor and maybe I'll see reason."

She snapped, "Those are the fittings."

"Then get yourself another patsy. Thintor and I don't care to walk into that abomination. Do we, Thintor?"

Thintor shook his head obediently. I think he was in a kind of daze. He looked from me to the angular woman, but he never said a word.

"I'll contact Hanthol Phan," she murmured finally.

I could hear the older man chuckle over the intercom. "Do whatever Eve Drum suggests, Antha Jodd. I think

you had better redecorate the other rut huts, too. Put an emergency rush on the project."

Antha Jodd nodded weakly.

It took us two hours, with five men and three women working. But we got the cot out and put in a small bed, an easy chair, a tiny desk. There was a solid blue carpet on the floor and blue-flowered chintz curtains on the window. The sunlight looked bright and cheery when it came peeping into the room, now.

I pushed Thintor Krumm into the easy chair. I sat down on the edge of the bed and crossed my legs. His eyes dropped to the underslopes of my smooth thighs. I felt it was a promising sign.

"They tell me you work in the kitchens," I said as a starter.

He nodded. Twice he swallowed before he managed to say, "In the receiving chutes. Yes."

"What does that mean?"

"The delivery trucks send the energiboxes of food into the chutes from outside, on the landing. I pick them up and store them in the proper places."

"Like energized steak for the steak slots, soup for the soup, like that?"

He flushed. "It isn't very hard. But it takes some muscle and I have strong muscles."

"I don't believe you," I teased.

He grinned at me for the first time. He shucked his right arm out of his shapeless garment and made a muscle for me. I was impressed. I even got up to put my hand on the big bulge of bicep. I stood a little closer than necessary, but I didn't brush against him too hard. He was like a shy young colt, ready to bolt at a wrong move.

I said, "Mmmm, you are strong. Tell me, Thintor, do any of the energiboxes ever break?"

"Not when I carry them. Sometimes when Askal Thow does. He isn't as strong as I am. Twice he's dropped them."

I asked, "How does the energized steak smell?"

He made a grimace. "Bad. Like bitter. It's funny, too, that it should smell like that, because the steaks, when they're de-energized, are delicious."

"Just the steak?"

"Soup, once. That smelled just as bad."

I was certain now that the unisexed doped the food to keep the sex impulses at their lowest possible point. The drugs, the dismal rut huts, were all a part of the program. Now I had to find out just how powerful these antisex drugs might be.

I caught hold of the lowcut vee of my remade dress and pulled the flaps apart. My white breasts with the dark brown nipples jutted up and outward. Thintor Krumm stared at them, mouth open. I looked down at my twin prides and saw they were still as exciting as ever. Maybe even more so, because the memory of what the doctors and the nurses had been doing was still in my body.

"These are *my* muscles," I smiled. "Like 'em?"

"I g-guess so. I've never seen things like that before."

"Feel them," I invited. "But gently."

His hands were shaking as they rose to touch my breasts and slide around them. My nipples jutted up fiercely. I started to react to his fondlings. The youth was so intent on my breasts that he was in a trance.

I let my hand drop downward and brush across his front, casually. He was completely unaffected by what he was doing with his hands. No excitement whatsoever. I was going to have problems with Thintor Krumm.

My hands caught his sack wrapper and pushed it off his chest. He shrank back. His eyes lifted from my breasts to my face. He looked like the frightened colt I'd imagined him some time back.

"I just want to see your other muscles," I smiled. "You're so strong that you must have very hard stomach muscles, too."

When the thing was at his waist—his left hand dropped

from my breast to clutch it—I put my palm on his hairless chest. I ran my palm down to his belly. He quivered under my touch, and his breath started getting shallow.]

“Ooooooh, you do have muscles here. Big, bulging ones, the kind I like. No wonder you can lift those energiboxes so easily.”

[I leaned against him with my breasts. He shook even more when he felt my nipples scratching his skin and the soft masses of my breasts rubbing. There was no sense saying anything more about his muscles, because I couldn’t think of any way to explain why my nipples were involved. So I just moved them around a little, smiling eagerly up at him.

My hand shoved his garment past his hips, practically pushing it out of his hand. He stood naked before me with his sack wrapper pooled about his ankles. He still was unaroused, I sighed.]

“You have a good body,” I told him. “Walk around for me.”

He walked up and down, but there wasn’t an exhibitionist bone in his body. His cheeks showed a faint flush of embarrassment.

[I shrugged my shoulders, getting my dress to drop off my upper arms. My breasts wobbled gently. I had to push thumbs in the dress where it hugged my hips to get it down. I made a production of it, for his benefit.

He looked, all right. Apparently I appealed to something inside him, even if not to his gonads. His eyes began to shine when my little pink belly came into view, and when he saw my blonde pubic hair, he sort of gurgled deep in his throat.]

“My muscles are different from your muscles,” I smiled.

He nodded, able to see this for himself. [My dress fell to the blue carpet. I kicked it gaily across the room, watching to make sure Thintor Krumm looked at where I was

all woman. He looked and then his tongue was out, licking around his lips. I took it for a good sign.]

"There, now. We can match any muscle we want to," [I said happily, and paraded around the room myself, trying to give my breasts the proper amount of bounce and my buttocks the jellylike jiggle that so interest the men of my own Time Era.]

"I like you," he said suddenly.

Hopefully I looked at his manhood. It was small, shrunken. Thintor Krumm was admiring me with his mind, which was very flattering, but his strong young body was still refusing to commit itself. I walked up to him and put my belly to his belly. I nudged his smallness with my blonde boskage.

"I'm glad you like me. But why don't you prove it the way a man should?"

He flushed. "I—I don't know what you mean."

Oh, brother! No wonder Evorn Ambol had been so disgusted. I was a little disgusted myself. But they don't name me Oh Oh Sex at L.U.S.T. headquarters for nothing. I have earned my reputation on many a bed or couch or chair.

[I wrapped my arms about him and pulled his head down. His lips kissed me but I had to wriggle my tongue back and forth for a couple of minutes before he got the idea and let his mouth come open. We French-kissed like that for some time, but it had no more effect on him than if he were eating a ham on rye.]

I sat down on the edge of the mattress. This was going to take a long time. Even if he had been fed an antisex drug, I told myself there must be some way to break through his defences. He wasn't consciously fighting my seductive tactics, I knew that; nor could I blame the fact that he didn't know what to do; his manhood would have reacted all by itself even in that situation.

No, I was positive it was the drugs the unisexed fed the

men and women here. It was up to me to see if I could overcome their effect.

I spread my thighs, told him to stand before me, between them. He advanced cagerly enough; I have no idea what he expected to happen, if anything. He was like a little boy being offered a present that was a'll wrapped up. He knew he would like the present, but not how much.

I used my fingernails on his upper thighs, scratching them lightly across his hard young belly. I said softly, "You have a real good muscle that you haven't used yet, Thintor. Relax and let's see if we can find it."

He shook and shuddered to the play of my fingernails about the area of his male organ, but I did not touch it. Not yet. That was to come.

I went on talking, to take his mind off the fact that he was alone in a rut hut with a female for the first time. I said, "I'll bet you've heard some real scarey stories about what goes on in these rut huts."

He nodded, getting the scared look again. "Yeah, some. They tell me that the woman gets thrown away after you have her. I—I'd hate anything like that to happen, just on account of me."

"They don't get thrown away, Thintor. The boys were just teasing you."

"They don't?" he asked eagerly.

"Certainly not. The girls who become mothers as a result of the mating go to the maternity wards where they stay to raise their babies. Maybe that's how such an awful rumor got started."

"By the Plague! That makes me feel better."

Indeed it did. He was showing signs of life below his navel. His flesh was getting bloated. Poor kid. The uni-sexes did this to normal men and women, hating the fact that they had sex and the unisexed ones did not. It was a terrible kind of torture.

Thintor Krumm was staring down at his rising flesh in

growing horror. "What's happening to me? I'm swelling down there. I must have hurt myself."

"Nonsense. This is a muscle you just haven't used yet. All men have them. When they get near a woman, like you're near to me, those muscles get all big and fat. Isn't it nice?"

"If—if you say so."

He was still conditioned against any enjoyment of sex. If he was any example of the males inside the Mating Huts, and he very definitely was, I felt real sorry for the whole bunch of them.

My hand moved to clasp him. His hips jerked involuntarily and he moaned. His eyes squeezed shut and his mouth fell open. Almost against his will, his hips rammed forward.

"Tell me that isn't nice," I smiled.

"Oooogh, it is. It is," he babbled.

"So you see, being in a rut hut can be very entertaining. I want you to understand this, Thintor."

"I understand it now," he agreed.

[I let go of him. I slid back on the bed, letting my thighs go wide. His eyes got big as he stared down at my femininity. His tongue licked his lips. He was shaking all over.]

"You want to know more about what to do in a rut hut with a girl?" I teased.

"Yes, please. Oh, please. Show me."

I was damn determined that one young male in the Mating Hut was going to look forward to his next appointment with a woman. I'd done what I could for Evorn Ambol and the doctors with their nurses. Of course, I could scarcely teach every man in the Mating Hut, but those with whom I came into contact I would change.

I wriggled my fingers at him. He put a knee on the bed, and then leaned forward toward me. My arms went around his body, drawing it down. My fingers hunted and found.

He slid forward, crying out.

Thintor Krumm was too excited to last long. He screamed, "I'm bleeding. I'm all blood. I've hurt myself."

I explained gently what had happened, holding his head to my breasts. I told him about a man and a woman, what made them different. He listened quietly, after a time, letting himself be soothed. The fact that my muscles were gripping him kept him from falling asleep, as Evorn Ambol had done.

The reason the doctors and nurses hadn't fallen asleep, I told myself, was that they knew more about the human body and its functionings than either Evorn or Thintor. They knew they were not supposed to go to sleep.

The young man gathered strength as I stroked and petted him. To his delight and surprise, he was soon ready for some more of the same. His hips jerked a little and he looked at me inquiringly.

"Be my guest," I murmured, lying back.

He was like the man who came to dinner. Once he'd lost his fears and wacky beliefs, once he understood that I was not to be discarded for what he was doing, he let go all the stops. His hips hammered away, his body flushed, he panted and yelled in his delight.

Thintor Krumm made up for his past years of adolescence in the next two hours of pleasure. He learned fast. I taught him about the female body, I sprawled there on the bed and let him examine my feminine attributes all he wanted.

Let him turn me as he would, enjoyed the kisses he ran down my back and over my quivering buttocks. His mouth kissed to my ankles and up again. His gentle hands pushed me onto my back and he did the same to my front.

My breasts fascinated him. He could not get enough of their soft smoothness. He played baby for a long time. Then he ran his tongue downward and over my upper thighs, my belly.

This served to make him realize he wasn't all done in,

by any means. He was quite proud of himself, as a matter of fact. He posed for me, expecting compliments. I complimented him, then I took him to me again and wrung him dry. I made him my slave, I guess, because when he was done he tried to tell me he wanted to see me again in the rut huts, again and again.

"Wouldn't it be nice if we could be together even when we weren't in the rut huts?" I smiled.

His eyes got round. "But how? Men and women don't share the same sleeping quarters."

"Too bad," I murmured, "but I wasn't thinking of sleeping quarters."

"But I work in the kitchens." His eyes glowed as they ran up and down my nudity. "You have very nice muscles, but you aren't strong enough for that sort of work."

"Isn't there anything at all I could do? To be near you all the time, that is?"

"Well, you could be a checker, I guess," he said hesitantly. "The checker is an old lady, it's a cinchey job."

"I'd like that."

"Unow Gentriss has been the checker since before my time," he murmured doubtfully. "I don't think she'd want to stop. She likes her job."

"Doesn't she ever take a vacation?"

"What's a vacation?"

When I explained what a vacation was, he shook his head gloomily. "Nobody ever gets any time off from a job, in the Mating Hut. But I do like the idea."

"Maybe I'll mention it to Hanthol Phan."

"You know Hanthol Phan? He's an important man, he runs the Mating Hut. He might be able to put you there in place of Unow Gentriss. She sure needs one of those vacations. Besides, you're a lot prettier than she is. It would be fun, working alongside of you."

"I'll see what I can do," I promised.

I made him get up and dress. He wanted to linger, he wanted more memories to take back to the kitchen with

him, maybe to regale Askal Thow with stories of his sex prowess. Much as I would have enjoyed another bed bout, I felt it was time to be about my L.U.S.T. business.

He slipped into his shapeless garment, making a wry face. "I sure hope they get those new clothes for us, real soon."

Thintor Krumm would look good in Tyrolean shorts and a shirt. I told him so. He said, "I hope Nantha Vrog will—" He broke off, flushing.

"Who's Nantha Vrog?" I teased. "Some cute girl?"

He rubbed his toe on the floor. "She works in the kitchens, too, as an arranger. She's a blonde girl. She smiles at me, sometimes."

"Has she ever been to the rut huts?"

He shook his head, looking worried.

"Maybe I can fix things so you and she can get together," I said thoughtfully.

"Can you? Do you really think Hanthol Phan will do what you ask?" he exclaimed excitedly.

"If I do a favor, will you do me one? If I come to work in the kitchens as a checker, will you help me escape?"

He sat down, utterly shocked. "Nobody ever escapes from the Mating Hut. Nobody!"

"I got out of the Mating Hut in Philashington. I can do it here, with your help. But you have to promise not to tell on me. That's very important."

He nodded slowly. "For Nantha Vrog, I'll do anything you ask. I love her very much. I want to get her in a rut hut as soon as possible."

"Don't tell her about us," I warned.

"But she'll know, when I start to—to do the things to her that you taught me to do to you."

"Tell her you read it in a book."

He nodded thoughtfully. "She might believe that. I read a lot, when I'm not working in the kitchens."

Thintor Krumm stood up again. "All right. I agree to help you. You'll help me get Nantha Vrog?"

"My word on it," I assured him.

He went out, closed the door.

I turned over and got forty winks of sleep.

Hanthol Phan was ready to help me in any way he could, I learned when I left the rut hut and sought him out. He explained that I had set the sparks for a flame of revolt that was seething throughout the Mating Hut. Half the men and women wanted out, to march through the streets to find the unisexes and to fight them, even without weapons. Hanthol Phan and some cooler heads counseled patience.

I would help the people in the Mating Hut, Hanthol Phan had explained to the hotheads. They must give me time to get to the Tyron and make sure his army would not side with the unisexes and against the real men and women. The army of Anders Orion was the one thing the men and women were afraid of. The army had weapons, the men and women did not.

The hotheads agreed to go along with Hanthol Phan.

"As a checker, I can get into one of those delivery trucks," I told the old man.

"That won't do you any good. The trucks are driven by unisexed ones. The mere sight of you will make them sick."

"You'll have to leave the details to me," I told him. "Oh, by the way. There's a blonde girl named Nantha Vrog in the kitchens. Why don't you see to it—as a special favor—that she gets to be sent into a rut hut with Thintor Krumm? And give old Unow Gentriss a vacation."

He listened as I explained vacations. His face creased into a smile as he shook his head. "You are a very strange girl. I don't know where you got hold of these crazy notions of yours."

"Still, I'll see what I can do. Vacations. Hmmm. They're similar to rest periods, in a sense. I'll order Unow Gentriss to take an extended rest period."

"And put me in her place."

Two days later, there was a summons throughout the Mating Hut for everyone to stop work and enter the audience halls. Here the ten men and women Controllers were stationed, one Controller to a hall. There were thousands of dresses and Tyrolean shorts with shirts for the women and the men to take to their sleeping cubicles and put on.

I went in with the kitchen crew. I was part of the working staff, now, being the arranger. The work was not hard. As a matter of fact, it was something of a snap, since the food boxes came every ten days. The arranger had nothing to do until the food boxes came. Unow Gentry did not need a vacation; I wondered what she might be thinking about vacations at the moment.

Thintor Krumm was torn between me and his girl friend, Nantha Vrog. His eyes went from her pert features to my own, almost apologetically. We sat on either side of him in the auditorium. Nantha Vrog wanted to hold hands with him, but he was having none of it; maybe he was afraid I would be jealous or angry.

Nantha Vrog was no fool. She knew something was in the wind. Her dark eyes touched me from time to time, suspiciously. I didn't want an enemy in the food kitchens, so I leaned over finally and taking his hand and hers, locked them together.

"Don't be so shy," I whispered to Thintor Krumm.

Nantha Vrog looked at me with gratitude in her eyes, dimpling a smile. I winked back at her, saying, "Sometimes we have to hit them over the head with a horse and buggy, honey."

She got the idea even if the words made no sense to her. She nodded and leaned her shoulder against her boy friend. Thintor seemed a little relieved to learn that I would not be jealous.

So I made another friend, Nantha Vrog.

I would need all the friends I could get, in a little while.

I stood there on the platform making marks on my

pads as the food energiboxes slid in through the chutes. I was going to have to wait to do what I wanted until the platform door was repaired—and that meant until the next time there was a food delivery. Ten more days.

Nine of those ten days dragged. I have never been so bored in all my life. There were no shops in the Mating Huts, which is how a girl like me spends her time when not working. I couldn't even work, since my work didn't happen for ten more days.

On the morning of the tenth day, the bombshell dropped.

Two men in tight green uniforms were outside my little cubicle when I opened its door to go to breakfast. They were armed with something like ray-rifles out of Buck Rogers. They had handguns of the same sort in holsters at their hips.

I goggled at them.

They were *men*.

Me, I don't make a mistake like that. These were all male huskies, with hard brown faces and close-cropped blond hair under their black helmets. They wore boots that reminded me of the parachuter boots of my own time. They looked tough and ruthless.

One of them said, "Eve Drum, you are under arrest."

There was no fooling with these guys, no sense telling them I was not Eve Drum herself. They knew me, all right. One of them gestured to me to march ahead of them down the corridor.

They brought me into a big office where Hanthol Phan, looking utterly miserable, sat in his chair like a good boy while another soldier—an important officer, to judge by the medals and insignia on his uniform jacket—stood like a wooden Indian in the middle of the carpeted room.

"Is this the one?" asked the officer.

Hanthol Phan nodded weakly.

The officer turned and lifted some papers, glanced

down at them casually. His hard blue eyes lifted to study me.

He asked, "Are these reports true? Did you seduce Evorn Ambol in his reception room? Did you entice three doctors and three nurses into having coital connection while they were on duty? Did you cause the inmates of the Mating Hut to adopt different garb? Did you also suggest changes in the rut huts' furnishings?"

I shrugged. He had me cold. "I did," I told him. "And I'd do it again, any time. Do you realize what it's like to be cooped up in this place, wearing drab garb and with not even the pleasures of the rut huts to look forward to?"

"The rut huts are designed for pleasure!" he snapped.

"Like hell they are!" I yelled.

He blinked. I am sure no one had ever dared raise his voice to His Magnificence before. A flush of angry red touched his features.

"You will be punished, Eve Drum. The Tyron himself has become interested in your case."

"He has?" I asked eagerly.

"Do you realize that since you have been here, the birth rate has multiplied by more than a thousand per cent? Those three nurses are pregnant. So are most of the women who have entered the rut huts since your arrival."

"Hey, how about that!" I exclaimed.

The officer glared at me. "This is high treason. Undoubtedly the Tyron will confer the death penalty on you."

"But why? All I did was try to make living conditions more endurable for the men and women here. Is that a crime?"

"My business is not to discuss your case but to bring you to the Tyron for trial and punishment. You will prepare to come with me."

"Without breakfast? I'm starving."

The officer inclined his head. "Very well. Go eat

breakfast, then report back here as soon as you have finished."

I turned on a heel and marched toward the door. The two soldiers who had come with me to Hanthol Phan's office did not stir a muscle. At the door I halted and looked back at the officer.

"Don't I get an escort?" I asked.

He gave a frosty smile. "Why? So you can become a martyr to the people eating in the dining halls? There is no way of escape. If you try hiding, my men and I have ways to flush you out. Go eat."

I went to eat. I settled for ham and eggs and two cups of coffee. Then I went into the kitchens.

The food delivery trucks were just pulling up. Nantha Vrog looked relieved when she saw me. She held the check-off pads in her hand but she was no checker. I took the pads from her, gave her a nod, and looked at Thintor Krumm.

He was at the platform door, ready to open it.

I whispered to him, "You two haven't seen me, remember. I didn't show up for work period this morning." The youth nodded, put a hand on the doorknob and turned it, leaning his shoulder into the heavy metal door. It eased open with a whoosh of compressed air.

I stepped out onto the platform.

The cool air of the outside world was different from the manufactured atmosphere of the Mating Hut. The city rose up in the near distance, huge and—oddly empty. Two big black hover-trucks were backed into the platform and a number of unisexes were busy lifting and carrying the energiboxes toward the chute openings for transfer inside the Mating Hut.

They did not see me. Their backs were turned, they were too busy at their jobs. I stepped to the edge of the platform, dropped down. I moved toward the nearest hover-truck.

I put fingers on a handle, tugged it.

The door opened. I hopped upward and inside the big hover-truck. The unisexed ones had gone about their task very efficiently, the interior of the truck was almost cleared. Only a few energiboxes remained. The rest of the truck was empty.

There was no place to hide.

And the unloaders were coming back into the truck.

CHAPTER SIX

Ma

The top of the truck was fitted with steel slats from which pulleys or cranes could be mounted when the truck was carrying extra-heavy loads. I put a foot on the nearest energibox and leaped upward. My hands closed on a slat.

I swung upward onto the slat just as a uniformed unisex stepped into view. Very gently I let myself down on the slats, not keeping my eyes on him for fear a steady gaze would alert him to the fact that there was somebody beside himself in the truck.

He bent, picked up an energibox. Two more unisexuals came to lift two more boxes. The truck was empty, by this time. I settled myself on the slats and tried to think.

Somebody closed the rear doors.

I was all alone in utter darkness. Nobody would notice my escape, I hoped, until the hover-trucks were long gone. Even if the officer did know I had escaped, he would never think to look outside the Mating Hut. No, he would reason that I had holed up somewhere in that gigantic building. He would search it from top to bottom.

Inside a few minutes, the hover-truck trembled as its nuclear motor throbbed. It whooshed off on its air cushions, taking me with it. I did not know where I was head-

ed, but any place was better than being under arrest by those army men who wore the dark green uniforms of the Tyron.

I waited in the darkness while the hover-truck made its run. There was no way of knowing how long the trip took or how far I went. It felt like an eternity, however.

When the air-whoosh slowed to a stop and the hover-truck settled to its resting blocks, I shifted on the slats, hooked my hands over one, and dropped lightly to the floor of the truck. I tiptoed forward toward the rear doors.

I listened but heard no sound.

I waited a long time.

Then I put hands on the lock-handle and turned it slowly. The rear doors opened slightly. I glued my eyes to the crack. The hover-truck was in some sort of garage. Well, that made sense. I opened the doors a little more.

Nobody yelled, so I slid my body through the opening and dropped lightly to the floor. The garage was huge, it held more than fifty big hover-trucks and a dozen smaller hover-craft. There were about twenty doors leading out of the garage. I had to choose among them.

My shoulders lifted in a reflex shrug. There was no way of knowing where I was going. One door might be as good as any other, so I walked up a short flight of steps and put my hand on a knob.

The door opened into a corridor.

I walked along the corridor until I came to another door. I opened this door and found myself in what appeared to be some kind of tool room. The light went on in the ceiling when the door opened. I found myself staring at a lot of wrenches, levers and such things. I started to close the door when my eyes caught sight of a glass panel behind it, which was a kind of map.

This might be a break.

I started studying the map. It showed interlocking tunnels and red lines that were, apparently, some sort of

long-distance travel system. Thanks to my indoctrination by Talnov Kuyzen and his technicians, I could read the words and signs that showed on the map.

My eyes found the palace of the Tyron. It was a good distance from the garage but I could reach it on the long-distance travel system. My only worry was, when the unisexes saw me and got sick, they would give the alarm and my goose would be about cooked.

I could not stay here forever. I had to make the break. So I opened the door and started walking. I got as far as the first intersecting tunnel.

As I turned the corner, I came face to face with a uniformed unisex. He-she was more surprised than I. I was an enemy to everybody in this place, so I was ready for trouble.

He-she was wearing a white jacket with black and white epaulettes jutting upward from his-her shoulders. The jacket was belted tightly, and from it was suspended a stun-gun in a black leather holster. He-she wore plastic slacks with a broad golden braid down each seam.

His-her hand went to the stun-gun.

I stepped forward, grabbed the right-arm sleeve and the buckle of his-her stun-gun belt. I whirled and bent.

He-she gave a loud yell as he-she went upward.

He-she rammed into the wall, and sank to the floor. I whirled to run. He-she was not knocked out, but fumbling for the stun-gun. If I turned my back, he-she would stun me.

My sandaled foot lifted in a kick. My toes caught the gun as it cleared the holster. The gun went flying through the air. I followed my foot down onto my adversary, slamming into his-her belly with a knee.

The air went out of his-her lungs.

He-she screeched in pain. My hands went to the long mane of hair that was coming down from the pins and combs that held it. My fingers tangled in that hair and, using the hair as a handle, I started banging his-her head

up and down on the hard paving of the corridor floor. He-she lost consciousness in a few moments.

I got to my feet, stared up and down the tunnel. Nobody was in sight. I eyed the white jacket and the plastic trousers. These would hide my femininity better than the made-over dress from the Mating Hut.

My hands went to my dress hem. I yanked the dress up and off. Naked, I knelt down, began to strip him-her. I got the white jacket off and under it I found a pair of breasts that any movie star might have envied. The breasts were held in by a tight cloth band.

I ignored the band, I was not going to torture myself by wearing that binding. I slipped the jacket on over my nakedness.

Under the plastic trousers, he-she wore tight boxer shorts. I removed them and gaped at the male organs that were revealed. Talk about hermaphrodites! This one was a perfect example. From the waist down, he-she was all male. From the navel upward, he-she was a gorgeous woman.

I slipped into the plastic trousers and the boots he-she had been wearing. I recovered the stun-gun and thrust it into the holster. I picked up my dress and dropped it to cover his-her nakedness.

Then I moved off down the corridor.

I met nobody else all the way to the long-distance tunnels. I found those by checking the signs on the many doors past which I walked.

When I opened the door, I triggered off some kind of signal because there was a whoosh and from the tunnel in the distance a hover-car came sliding on its air cushions. It came to a stop before the mounting dais. I stepped inside the car, settled my spine against the seatback.

There were buttons set into a dashboard. I studied them, finally settling on the stud that would take me to the palace of the Tyron. The hover-craft moved forward without sound. A plastic top moved into place over me.

The hover-car picked up speed. Inside seconds, the thing was traveling at better than a hundred miles an hour. If it had not been for the curved plastic dome that protected me, I would not have been able to breathe.

The hover-car traveled in absolute blackness. I sat there frozen, gripping the handles fitted on either side of the car. Luckily, the hover-car was beautifully streamlined so that the air pressure slid past it with a faint sound. The thing trembled under me because of its speed, and I thought that in something like this, one could cross the whole damn continent in a day or two.

In time, the craft slowed.

It eased in against a platform. The plastic dome slid back. I got out and stood on the platform, staring around me. There was nothing here but a striped door. If I was underneath the palace, the Tyron didn't care about protection. The least I'd expected to find was one of his soldiers on guard.

But then maybe the unisexes were afraid of their Tyron. Nobody in his right senses would come here of his-her own free will. Besides, there were probably armed men just beyond the striped door.

I heaved a sigh. I had to move forward. I could not stay here. My hand went to the handle. The door opened. I stepped into a small anteroom fitted with several couches, plus chairs. There were a number of paintings on the walls.

Apparently this was some kind of waiting room. I crossed it, found myself in another corridor. This whole place seemed to be made up of tunnels. No wonder nobody was ever seen on the city streets. The real city streets were underground.

I walked some more. I came to a staircase, one of those moving ones where you got to sit down and let the staircase do the walking. I planted my rump on a seat and waited.

The staircase took me up a long way. Nobody came onto the many landing areas; I had the moving stairway all to myself. When it came to the top and disappeared under a metal shelf to begin its downward run, I got off and found myself on a railed platform fitted out with a number of seats and a grey door.

There was a sign on the door that translated into: *Forbidden!*

I smiled and opened the door.

I stepped out onto a balcony. The balcony looked down on a small courtyard fitted with varicolored flaggings, some marble fountains, marble benches, and a lot of trees and shrubs, including some flower beds. There was nobody in the courtyard.

I walked along the balcony until I found steps leading into the garden. I went down them. Just as I set foot on the colored flaggings I heard a voice laughing.

A female voice, at that. The short hairs on my neck rose up as a danger signal. There were no female voices outside the Mating Huts! Had I gone from one Mating Hut to another? I gritted my teeth and stepped behind a big bush.

Two females came along a flagstoned walk. They were women, all right. They wore nothing above their middles, and something like transparent harem trousers below them. There were silver bells around their ankles, and their feet were protected by golden slippers.

Their breasts were full, plump. Those breasts jiggled and shook the way my own would do, if I were dressed the way they were, with nothing above their navels. I stared at them, frowning. I didn't get it at all.

This was no Mating Hut I was in. It was the Tyron's palace. And the Tyron was a unisex. It made no sense.

I started forward to talk to these dolls.

They turned their heads casually. Their faces changed from curiosity to utter horror. They screamed, mouths

wide open. I stood frozen. What the hell was wrong with them? Then I remembered I was wearing a uniform. They thought I was a unisex.

"Don't yell," I called.

They turned and ran, still screeching. I looked to my left and right. I was very vulnerable out here in the open air, so I ran after them.

Their screams still rang out as they ran through an arched doorway and along a hall. One of them turned, saw me racing after them and promptly fainted. Her companion ran on, not daring to turn her head to see what had happened to her companion.

I knelt down beside the fallen woman.

When she opened her eyes after a few seconds, I smiled at her. "Don't be afraid, I'm not going to hurt you. I've lost my way. Where am I?"

"You're in the Tyron's palace," she panted. Her eyes studied my face and blonde hair.

"What are you doing here?" I asked. "You're a female. You ought to be in a Mating Hut."

She shuddered and shrank back. Her black eyes went up and down the hall, seeking help. Apparently there was no help coming so she inched away from me on her behind.

"Please don't hurt me. I w-won't tell anyone you lost your way. B-but you'd better get out of here, before the guardsmen come. They—they can't be far away."

I nodded and stood up. I was where I wanted to be, all right. The only difficulty was, to find and slay the Tyron. I ran away from the frightened girl until I found a hall and ducked into that.

This hall led me to a door which opened into a room where there were a lot of girl-girl clothes. I closed the door behind me, more puzzled than ever. Because these clothes were not like the plasticine garments Talnov Kuyzen had led me to some time back. These were garments designed to bring out the feminine beauty of a woman.

With relief, I slid out of the black-and-white jacket and plastic trousers. I marched my naked self along the rows of hanging garments. I lifted off a black lace jacket and a pair of matching panties that went with it.

I held the black lace to my nudity. Whoever had designed this thing had sex attraction in mind. You could see my nakedness through the lace, which was the whole idea. I put down the garments on a table and turned to some other clothes.

There was a long maroon robe with such a low vee that my naked breasts showed when I slipped into it. It was cut away down the lower front, too. As a matter of fact, it came together at a big silver button covering my navel.

I tried on a cutaway leather garment not unlike a bathing suit. There were holes through which my breasts fitted, a diamond opening to show my navel, a transparent patch that revealed my blonde pubic hair. I blinked, staring at my reflection. Some kind of sex maniac must have made these things.

I went back to the black lace number. Sure, it hung at my throat by a lone ribbon and opened all the way down to my hips, but the bikini-type panties hid a little of my womanhood. Not much, but a little.

I shook my blonde hair, wishing it were a little longer, even though it fell to below my shoulders. I paraded myself around in front of the mirror, thinking that David Anderjanian would have loved me in something like this.

My feet slipped into black satin slippers.

I was ready to find the Tyron.

I slipped out into the hall. I could hear voices from somewhere, probably that of the girl with whom I'd talked and the male voices questioning her. I turned my back on them and walked straight ahead. My forward progress was stopped by a door.

The door opened onto a big pool.

It was an indoor pool, with maybe twenty or more

naked ladies in the water or sprawled on the poolside apron. I found myself staring at blondes, brunettes and redheads of varying shapes and sizes. Every one of these girls was a real doll, any one could have won a beauty contest, hands down.

I was standing in the doorway as every head swung in my direction. The faces told me I was most unwelcome. With all my will power, I made myself walk forward. My better judgment told me to run, to get the hell out of here.

A statuesque brunette lifted herself from a little bench where she'd been sitting. She advanced on me, breasts jellifying, thighs shimmying. I watched her hips swing sideways and felt lost and lonely.

"What are you doing here?"

The menace was clear to read in her dark eyes. I swallowed two or three times. The brunette saved me the trouble of making up a story. She said, "You're the new one, aren't you? The girl Anders Orion found in Tex-izona?"

I nodded. Behind her, the other girls were rising to their feet, glaring at me. They sure did hate strangers.

The brunette said softly, "That's too bad, honey. Because we don't like new rivals here. The Tyron is happy with his little family. We don't need newcomers."

I gulped. She added, "You can turn around and run for it, if you want. But if you let yourself get caught by the Green Guards, you'll wake up one morning with your throat slit."

"Do you chase away many women this way? And what kind of family does the Tyron have?"

The brunette waved her hand. "We're his family. His harem. We're all the family he needs. He's quite a man, the Tyron."

"He is?" I asked stupidly.

Her brows drew together in a scowl. "Of course he is. As far as we're concerned, he's the greatest man on Earth."

My head began to spin. Everywhere I turned I kept meeting new puzzles. Anders Orion was a unisex. Otherwise, all the real people—or most of them, at any rate—wouldn't be imprisoned inside the Mating Huts.

"Now clear out of here," snapped the brunette.

"Uh-uh," I shook my head. "I'm here to stay, baby. Get used to the idea."

I went to brush past her. Her hand darted out for my blonde hair, but I was figuring on her doing something like that, so I ducked and whirled, grabbing her wrist and banging her hip with mine. She screeched as she rose upward to fly gracefully through the air. She came down hard on the pool tiling.

The other girls leaped to their feet and charged.

At me.

I went to meet them running as hard as I could. From five feet away I left my feet and dove sideways into their calves and ankles. Ten girls went sprawling with screams and shrieks of unadulterated rage. I kept on going, doing a kind of somersault, and got back on my feet again.

There were girls on either side of me.

I kicked a foot into the creamy belly of one female, then ducked under the reaching hands of the second to turn and belt her in the solar plexus with the heel of my hand. The air left her lungs and she gagged.

More girls came for me. I used savat on them, my little pink heels fingering pretty jaws and soft bellies and plump breasts for targets. I must have knocked out about a dozen of them, but there were always more of them coming.

I used judo, bouncing and battering them halfway across the big pool chamber. My karate chops came in handy too, flashing out across jaws and into necks. One girl was hobbling on a sprained ankle, there were at least half a dozen with bloody noses, some were nursing sprained wrists. Still more had the wind knocked out of them.

I was holy hell, socking it to them.

Once in a while my fingers squeezed into a breast, using it as a handle to yank a girl off balance. I even grabbed a handful of more intimate parts to make a girl scream in pain as she undid the hammerlocks she had secured about my neck.

I was being backed up steadily toward the pool waters. I guess the girls figured that in the water they stood a better chance against me. They were right. They did.

Because four of them came for me in a wedge. I got hands in their flowing hair, but their arms were under me, sliding about my legs and lifting them, while fists butted my belly and teeth fastened in my hip.

I flew backward through the air.

Water broke my fall. I went under like a stone with all four dames maintaining their grips. Dimly I could hear other bodies plunging into the pool, and I knew intuitively they were all heading in my general direction, with murder in their minds.

Fingers caught my hair. Arms and hands held my head under. My lungs strained for air. I didn't want to drown in a harem pool in the year 3693, but there didn't seem to be very much I could do about it.

My eyes were open, most of the time. I saw and felt that I was surrounded by a host of soft female bodies, pressing so closely I didn't believe anybody could tell who was who. Most everybody was underwater in this deep end of the pool.

I traced an arm to a bobbing breast and an armpit. I put out my hand and tickled. I tickled other ribs, then some more.

The girls who had hold of my hair could have withstood mere pain. Tickling got them. They wriggled and twisted and then their hands came away from my hair to push at the hands that were making them laugh so much under the water that they came damn near drowning.

I bobbed to the surface, gulped at air, and went under before anybody could realize I was gone. I swam away from the group of fighting females. By this time they were pulling anybody's hair in the hope it was mine, and once or twice as I gave them a backward glance, I saw little hates and petty jealousies spilling over into a real knock-down-and-drag-out battle.

I reached the side of the pool.

My hands went to the edge. I hoisted myself up, right into a pair of green eyes. The green eyes were set in a lovely face below a spill of auburn hair. This woman was absolutely beautiful, except for the black fury that contorted her face.

"Bitch," she cried softly, and lunged.

I lifted up and lowered my head. I butted her in the nose with the top of my skull. She screeched and went sideways, all the fight gone out of her. She clapped pale hands to her nose and her green eyes welled tears at me.

"It's what you get, honey," I panted, "for ganging up on one lone, defenseless female."

"You b-b-broke my n-n-nose," she wailed.

Somebody laughed, with hate as an undertone.

"Look! The newcomer broke Talka's nose!"

Blood spurted down between her white fingers. She looked terrified, as if she might bleed to death. I stood over her, dripping poolwater from every pore. I felt sorry for her. She looked soft and weak and helpless, crouching at my feet.

The other women were pulling themselves from the pool, looking from redhaired Talka to me and back to Talka again. I gathered that she was some sort of power here, but that she was hated by nearly everybody.

I told her, "Get some ice. I'll fix your nose."

The green eyes glared up at me, but she nodded. "Ice," she screeched like a fishmonger's wife. "Get ice! Get ice!"

A fat man—probably a eunuch, if they had such things

—came running up with a bucket of ice cubes. His fleshy jowls quivered and his eyes were big as they stared at my nudity. He kept his distance from me. He didn't want one of my heels in his middle.

I put my arm about the redhead, drew her to her feet. She was shaking with fright and pain, so I lulled her with a croon in my throat as I guided her toward a marble bench. She sat down and, at my direction, threw back her head.

My fingers pressed ice to her nose.

It took a few seconds only. The flow of blood was stopped. I reached for a towel and gently washed away the blood. Her green eyes studied me curiously.

"Who are you?" she asked sullenly.

"Eve Drum, honey."

"Where did you learn to fight like that?"

I grinned at her. "You wouldn't believe it. Let's just say my brothers taught me."

"You're like some kind of wild animal."

"Only when I'm annoyed. Other times I can be sweet as sugar."

She sniffed a couple of times, testing her nose. It was going to swell up, but it wasn't broken. I leaned down and kissed her gently on her big red mouth. She gasped and the corners of her lips quirked into a faint smile.

"We'll have to accept you, I suppose," she muttered, touching her nose gingerly with a fingertip.

"It won't be all that bad," I reassured her.

She shook her red hair. "Every newcomer is a threat to us. Orion keeps only twenty of us here. If a newcomer arrives in whom he shows an interest, one of us is sent away. This is a pleasant life, we don't want to change it."

"Maybe I won't be here long," I told her.

"He'll like you," she muttered dolefully.

Her green eyes studied my naked body. I glanced down at myself. Sometime during the fight, I'd lost my black lace jacket and the bikini panties, so I was as nude as the rest

of the girls. I was surprised to find so few bruises. There was a scratch or two, but hardly more.

I said, "I'm going in the water. I'm hot and more than little tired."

She stood up and took my hand. "I'll go in with you, if you think it's all right—about my nose, I mean."

"Be my guest, honey."

We dove in and swam across the pool. We came back and clung to the pool rim, smiling at each other. The other girls hung back in little clusters, watching us. Talka must be head lady here, I told myself. They gave her plenty of elbow room.

"What is the Tyron like?" I asked.

She shrugged. "Like anybody else. He's a man. He—"

"Now hold on. All the men are in the Mating Huts."

"Not all. Oh my, no."

I digested that, slowly. Maybe I was just dumb, but none of what I knew seemed to add up, not at all. I said, "I thought this world was run by the unisexes."

She made a grimace of disgust. "There are a lot of the unisexes, yes. They outnumber us, five or six to one. But that doesn't mean there aren't a lot of men and women. There are, but they're all under the protection of the Tyron."

"And the Mating Huts?"

She shook her head. "I can't tell you much more. We're kept in a kind of seclusion ourselves, here. We hear only what we're supposed to hear."

I would have to wait until I met the Tyron, I decided, but when I did that, I was going to kill him.

[The redhead was brushing against me with her naked hip and thigh from time to time as we clung to the pool edge.] I began to wonder, just a little. In such harems as have existed on Earth in my own time and before, where so many women were gathered together at the disposal of one mere man, they turned to one another for sexual solace.

[I let my palm slide up her bare back in a gentle caress. Under my palm I felt her shiver as she turned her wide green eyes on me. There was puzzlement and curiosity in her stare.]

"You made me feel funny, just then," she murmured.

"Like good?"

She nodded, smiling. "Yes. Very good. The way Anders Orion makes me feel when he caresses me."

I nodded my head at the other women about the pool. "And they? Do they make you feel that good when they caress you?"

She looked at the lovely women in their nudity. She frowned. "Why no. But then we never caress each other." She said it doubtfully, as if she were entertaining the birth of a new idea.

"It must be hard for you girls, with just one man to please you," I said thoughtfully, letting my palm go up and down her spine again. "How often does he send for you?"

"Not often enough," she murmured, letting her body stroke mine in reaction to my hand on her back.

"And you suffer from neglect," I stated.

[My hand slid over her soft, smooth buttocks. She gave a little cry and turned her body in the water, bringing her loins in against my thigh. She let herself rub me there as my fingertips went down and around her behind.]

"Don't stop," she breathed.

I felt like the snake in the Garden of Eden, but I told myself I was doing this for the better health of the girls in the harem. One man didn't deserve all this beauty. Besides, after I'd killed the Tyron, what were the poor darlings going to do for amusement?

I opened my mouth to tell her that I would show her how she could overcome the long nights' loneliness. Before I could do that, a big bronze door clanged open.

And a man in a tight green uniform stepped out.

CHAPTER SEVEN

His eyes went over the women. I could read lust in his eyes. He was practically drooling over the harem lovelies. A couple of them were sitting on the pool benches with their legs raised, showing off their fluffy femininity. Twice the man swallowed before his eyes brushed across Talka and me at the edge of the pool.

He marched forward.

"There has been an alarm about a blonde woman in the lower corridors," he said to Talka. His eyes touched my face as he studied it.

Talka shrugged. "I know nothing about the lower corridors. I never go outside the harem walls."

The man said to me, "You are a stranger."

"I'm the newcomer to the harem."

He frowned, then stepped away from the pool. "Get out. Let me look at you."

"I'm reserved for the Tyron."

He frowned, then stepped away from the pool. "Get out at once."

"He's the major-domo of the harem," Talka whispered.

I shrugged and climbed out of the pool. The major-

domo studied my nakedness with hot eyes. There was approval in his face as he nodded.

"I did not expect you until day after tomorrow. How did you get here so early?"

My shoulders lifted, making my breasts wobble. His eyes stared at their quivering roundness. I said, "How should I know? They simply brought me here and left me."

He considered that as his eyes went down over my belly to my blonde delta and along my thighs. Then he muttered, "It makes no difference, I guess. Come with me."

I padded after him across the pool tiles and toward the big bronze door. Every eye was on my jouncing behind, as if trying to drag me back. It was tough enough being one of twenty without seeing a new one added to their ranks. I felt sorry for the harem honeys.

The major-domo brought me along the corridor to the room where all the girl-girl costumes hung. He went in, with me following him. His hand yanked a bellpull.

An older woman stepped from behind two curtains on the far side of the room. Her costume was a sheer robe of transparent white linen. With the light behind her, the major-domo and I could see the silhouette of her shapely body.

She walked toward us, her dark eyes studying my nudity. "Another one?" she asked as she came closer.

"Yes. A newcomer. Outfit her for the Tyron."

"Why not let me pick my own costume?" I asked brightly

They stared at me as if I'd suddenly grown another pair of eyes. "Nobody picks the costumes of the initiates but myself," said the woman haughtily.

I wanted some sort of weapon with me when I was taken in to the Tyron. I might be able to kill him with my bare hands but a bit of sharp metal would help. I figured

that among so many outfits that hung here, there ought to be one with a long pin or a length of sharp metal.

So I said, "I know how to dance. If I could pick out the right garment, it would help."

The major-domo glanced at the woman. "Let her, Thista. If she pleases Anders Orion, he will be pleased with us."

She looked doubtful, but she finally nodded. My female intuition told me these two were sweet on each other, that if I gave them a few minutes alone, they'd know what to do with their time.

I said brightly, "Naturally, you would have to approve my choice. I don't expect you not to."

The man put a hand on her bare arm. She sighed and nodded, waving a hand at the hanging garments. "All right. Pick something out. Paankor and I will wait."

[She was not unmoved by his nearness. I saw her nipples making tiny tents in her linen garment and she swayed against him as I stepped past her.] I headed for the garments and ducked into a nearby aisle. I tiptoed back.

She was whispering, "You're always like this when you come out of the pool chamber."

"Can you blame me? All that nakedness!"

"Poor darling. I do wish there was something I could do to help you. But here—there's no place."

I sighed. These folks of the thirty-seventh century had no imagination at all. Maybe I could help them the way I had the doctors and nurses, plus Evorn Ambol. I peeked out between a couple of dresses at them.

[She was standing with her front plastered to him. Her hips were making gentle rubbing movements. Paankor was very flushed in the face and his arms were locked about her. Suddenly his arms tightened and he drew her against him as his open mouth went down to claim her lips.]

I moved away on bare feet, silently.

My search took a little longer than was necessary, real-

ly. I wanted to give the man and woman a little time to smooch. So I paraded up and down the seemingly endless rows of garments—Anders Orion must have a bit of the voyeur in him, I was thinking, to need so many changes of clothing for the dolls he summoned to his bedchamber—trying to find just what I needed.

I finally settled on a thinly transparent bolero that was hooked together by a big silver buckle. The buckle had a pin about five inches long that held it together. One jab of that pin—say, in an eye—and the Tyron of Earth would be a dead man.

I found a garment that looked just like a stripper's panel, of thin blue stuff of the same material as the bolero. I put it about my naked waist and fastened it. It hung low on my hips, it showed a few blonde hairs in front and the crease of my buttocks behind. The panel could hold some sort of weapon.

If I could find a weapon, that is, other than the pin on the belt buckle.

I went down more aisles. Finally I came on a tiny dagger that was in a sheath hung on a narrow leather belt. For the jungle tigress type, I assumed. I removed the dagger, tore a tiny rip in the hem of the stripper's panel, and slipped the knife inside. I stared at my reflection in the mirror.

Nobody could possibly guess I was armed.

I walked back toward Paankor and Thista, my bare feet making no sound. They were still in an embrace, his hands clawing at her plump buttocks as he kept her wedged against his front. They were moving very slowly together, back and forth, and I heard them moan from time to time.

"Why not get comfortable?" I asked.

They whirled, guilt touching their startled faces. Their eyes were glazed. Anger began to form on the woman's features, but I forestalled that by turning and yanking at a

couple of costumes, dumping them down on the floor to form a big, cushiony sort of bed.

"Why not lie down here?" I chirped.

"It is not a bed," Paankor growled.

The woman was not as hidebound as the major-domo. Women may be emotional creatures but they also disregard much which, to a mere male, is almost insurmountable. Thista stared at me, at the pile of tumbled garments, and her eyes narrowed thoughtfully.

"It is a bed," I said, quite reasonably. "It is very comfortable and will even let you roll around a little."

Thista nodded vaguely. "Yes, it is a bed."

Paankor was a little stunned. He was not dull-witted, he was just accustomed to a certain way of thinking. He asked, "It is?"

I said, "Why don't you two make yourselves comfortable? I'll run on and find the Tyron."

Paankor muttered, "I have to show you the way." His thoughts were not on me but on Thista who was crouching, spreading the garments and adding to them. Her hips and rondures of her buttocks were clearly visible through the thin linen of her sole garment.

I stepped closer to him. "Just point out the way, Paankor. I'll tell the Tyron you left me at the door."

He did not look at me. His stare was fixed on Thista who was turning and sitting on the piled-up garments, bouncing a little to test their elasticity. Her breasts jiggled nicely, outlined by the white linen. I noticed that she had gathered up the long skirt of her dress, so that it was above her knees and rising higher.

She knelt down then and scrabbled the linen up to her hips. Paankor gave a little cry as he saw her shapely thighs, maybe for the first time. The linen went up. Now we could see her hips and belly and the trimmed blackness of her pubic growth. She lifted off her garment and knelt naked.

Paankor was gasping. Her breasts were big and over-

ripe, with huge dark nipples stiffly erect. She was staring him in the eyes, raising her hands to loosen the thick black glossiness of her hair.

"Take off your clothes," she breathed.

Paankor muttered, "The newcomer."

"Plague take the newcomer," she said softly.

Her eyes were on me in my impromptu costume. She smiled, "That looks very sexy, dear. Very sexy indeed. You'll find the Tyron at the far end of the corridor, where the doorway is flanked by a couple of marble eagles. Go right in."

[She lay back on the piled garments and put her hands behind her head. Her white thighs fell apart. She smiled up at Paankor invitingly.]

"Well? Come on! That little blonde showed us what to do, and we're going to do it. If you're going to hang around those harem floozies and get all excited, I'm going to take advantage of it from now on.

"So get that uniform off!"

He started to obey her. I turned on a heel, went out and closed the door gently behind me. Those two would be busy for some time to come. The harem cuties would not leave the poolside. I had this part of the palace to myself.

I walked down the corridor.

The twin marble eagles seemed to beckon toward me. I walked between them, opened the door and stepped into a room where two walls were solid glass.

I closed the door, leaning against it for a moment to take in what I was looking at. There were soft lights here and there that made for a romantic setting. A thick white carpet was underfoot, and two couches were set facing each other across from a small glowing fire in a circular metal pit. A brass cone was fitted above the fire to gather up its smoke. A table with two chairs stood in a kind of alcove. There was food piled on the tabletop, steaming

hot. The tempting smells made me realize I hadn't eaten in a long, long time.

I moved into the room with hips swinging.

As far as I could tell, I was the only person in the room. I studied the hassocks and the chairs, the couches, the oil paintings on the wall. I could have been in the Park Avenue penthouse of a millionaire industrialist of my own twentieth century, as far as appearances went.

I walked to one of the glass walls.

There was a tiny balcony outside but the view was good enough from in here. I was staring out over New Yorkon. It was night. As far as my eye could see, there were streamers of lights here and there, some white, some blue, some red. It looked, from this height, to be a bustling metropolis.

Yet the streets, what I could glimpse of them, were empty of all life. Where were the unisexes? There should be millions of them in a place this size. Surely not all of them could be indoors!

More and more I was getting the nightmarish feeling that this huge area of gigantic buildings and streets was void of life of any sort. New Yorkon had been built to house as many as twenty or thirty million people. Where were they?

I shivered.

A voice said, "Are you afraid?"

I whirled. The room was still empty. The voice sounded amused. "Do not be afraid. I am not going to harm you. As you may guess, I am the Tyron of Earth, Anders Orion."

"It makes sense, to be afraid," I said.

The voice came at me again. "You are a different sort of female. Most of the others would be sobbing with fear or vexation. You are not vexed, at all."

Little did he know! I was vexed, all right. Maybe I didn't show it, but I was asking myself how in hell I was going to kill a man who was either invisible or hidden

away in another room. I began to wonder if Anders Orion was a man at all. Maybe he was some sort of super-machine.

I said softly, "I am disappointed. I had hoped to please the Tyron."

"How?"

There was tiredness in the voice, suddenly. It finally dawned on me that the Tyron of Earth was no better off than his lowliest subject. Just as most of his people had forgotten how to make love except by rote and on a bed, so had he.

Could be the man was bored by routine sex.

Maybe I could offer him something different. Oh Oh Sex had helped others to a new awareness of their bodies, and to understand that sexual pleasure was not a happiness to be known only in one certain way. What I had done for Evorn Ambol, for those doctors and nurses and young Thintor Krumm, not to mention Paankor and Thista, I could do for Anders Orion.

Before I killed him, that is.

My body would be the last meal of the condemned man.

I raised bare arms above my head, began to swing my hips back and forth in a kind of lazy hula. I arched my hips and rotated my belly.

"What are you doing?"

"Dancing," I murmured.

To invisible music I kept doing my lazy kootch dance. I wished for a twentieth century combo that might turn on for me, help me to get more into the spirit of the thing, but the best I could do was make music inside my head.

My pale belly bobbed, my hips looped. I am a dancer of no mean ability; I have been taught by experts. My breasts shook beneath the pale blue bolero that tried to hide them, and where my nipples scraped across the material, they stood up large as life.

"Wait," said a voice.

I did not wait, I hummed wickedly to myself and shook my hips and bounced my belly. I took mincing little steps about the room and got into the mood of the moment.

I was facing a large oil painting on one of the walls. Suddenly it swung up and outward. A man in a long maroon robe stepped into view through a sliding panel.

He was handsome, in a craggy sort of way. His hair was black and grey at the temples. His shoulders were very broad, and his chest was deep, so that he gave the appearance of being a man of great strength.

"Hi, there," I said softly and hip-swung toward him.

His glittering eyes were on my navel and my almost-naked hips as I slithered them at him. His firm, wide mouth was a little open as if to help him breathe. He stood there as I came right up to him and put my belly against him.

He was ready for love, all right. His manhood was rampant with emotion. I nudged it a couple of times with my mons Veneris and then I backed away coyly.

His muscular arms shot out as if to grab me. I ducked out of his reach and stood on spraddled legs, doing a vicious bump and grind. For a brief moment, I thought his eyes were going to pop out of his skull.

"Stand still," he growled.

"You do the standing," I giggled, putting my hands to the big buckle of the bolero. "And you do it very well."

He smiled faintly, staring down at himself. The maroon robe he wore was opened down the middle and I could see a very prominent part of him taking a peek at me. I found him good to look at. He was all man, all right.

"They told me in the city outside that you are a unisex. But you're not. You're a real man."

"Of course I am. But nobody knows that except a few carefully selected men. And women."

I had gone on doing my bump and grind but as my hands fell away from the buckle with its long pin, and my

naked breasts plopped into view as the bolero flaps flew every whichway, I started into a shimmy.

He unbuttoned his maroon robe, let it fall. He was very hairy, his chest hairs ran down into his bellyhairs and then narrowed until their blackness mingled with the bush on his lower belly. He came toward me with a determined step.

"The bedroom is behind you," he said.

He was herding me toward the bedroom as a dog nudges a wandering sheep back toward the flock. I said, "To hell with the bedroom. It's better out here."

He halted and stared at me as if I'd gone mad. "One always makes love in a bedroom. And I want to make love to you very much. Why did you say your name was?"

"Eve Drum. But I'm no ordinary girl. I don't like making love under ordinary conditions. That's the trouble with—"

"Eve Drum!" he snapped. "Eve Drum! But that's the girl I sent to the Mating Hut for. The girl who disappeared!"

It was my turn to halt. I stopped my dance and grabbed for the bolero buckle. I was going to have to kill him right here and now. Too bad, because he was a big man, sexually speaking, and the sight of his arousal had tuned me in to its vibrations.

However, Anders Orion was smiling at me. I couldn't kill a smiling man.

"Where did you go? How did you get here? I wanted to honor you, to question you."

My hand fell from the buckle. "To honor me? Question me? I—I thought you wanted to kill me."

[He looked at my naked breasts bulging past the loose bolero flaps.] He said, "This is no time for making talk. I want you very much."

I could see that for myself. I smiled, "It's always better

when you take your time. Let's talk for a little while. And if you don't mind, I'd like to eat a little, too."

I showed him my back view as I walked toward the dining alcove and the hot meats and breadstuffs set out on the platters. I guess he liked seeing my buttocks partially exposed because he took a step or two and then his arms closed around me, pinning his rigid strength to my soft rump.

"Easy there, chief," I giggled.

"Did you hear me? I want you. Now!"

"Not yet, but soon."

I could hear him panting in my ear. I added, "Believe me, it's better when you wait. You'll see. Now just be patient."

Very gently I undid his hands from where they clasped my belly. He was very excited. I gathered that nobody had made him this excited for a long time.

I shrugged out of the bolero, gave it to him to hold. I walked to the table and made myself a sandwich with plenty of meat between two slices of what seemed to be rye bread. I poured myself a goblet of chilled wine.

I munched the sandwich while his eyes went over my bare breasts and down to the golden hairs showing above the edge of the stripper's panel. He was almost shaking, he was so eager to make love to me. That's the way I like my men to be, to tell the truth.

"If you're a real man—and I can see quite plainly that you are," I said between bites and chews, "why aren't you helping your fellow men and women inside the Mating Huts? Do you realize the kind of life they're compelled to lead?"

His hand waved at the air. "All in good time. I do intend to help them. Why do you think I've taken over the world. government?"

"To conquer Time," I blurted.

I could have kicked myself. But he only frowned in a

puzzled way and looked as baffled as I felt. "Conquer Time? What are you talking about?"

Well, the fat was in the fire now. I plunged ahead bravely, tensing my muscles to attack and kill before he could alert his Green Guards.

"The purple disc you sent into the twentieth century," I accused. "It destroyed twelve acres of Kansas wheatland. It was your opening shot in your terror campaign against us."

He sank down into a chair, staring at me. "Terror campaign?"

"Sure. You want the whole Earth, in time, to be subject to you—and I've got to admit you have the weapons to make it happen."

"But this is utterly fantastic."

"Look, chief. I saw the pictures. I watched them over the television screen we set up in our headquarters. I *saw* those wheat fields destroyed. I *heard* your voice telling us that if we didn't surrender to you, you would treat our cities the same way."

"You saw me? You heard me say—*that*?"

I nodded, reaching for more food. I chewed on juicy meat and freshly baked bread and thought about how nice it was to be Tyron of Earth because you got to eat so good and live in a love-in apartment like this one in a palace bigger than any ten palaces built before my own time.

"Sure. I saw you, I heard you."

Anders Orion looked at me sharply. "This means that you come from the twentieth century." He snapped his fingers. "In a transitimer, of course."

"Right the first time."

I finished my food and poured myself another glass of chilled wine. I took a good swallow, then began sipping it. My glance moved around the table, seeing a couple of carving knives. I'd wasted my time with the bolero buckle

and the tiny knife in the hem of my stripper's panel. There were plenty of kill-weapons right here.

"Who brought you?" he asked softly.

"The Sisters. The Resistors, that is. They want you out of the way."

His eyes were very hard. "Why did they bring you?"

My hand flashed downward and came up with a knife. I leaped at Anders Orion so swiftly, as I have been trained to do, that the point of my carving knife was at his throat before he could blink twice.

"To kill you," I whispered.

There was no fear in his eyes. His big body was tense, I felt his hard muscles gathering themselves for the task of dying like a brave man. A tiny voice in my head told me to kill him but there was something wrong about this whole set-up.

He said, "You're making a big mistake."

I nodded. "Frankly, that's what I'm afraid of. But convince me, anyhow. I'm beginning to get the feeling that I've been suckered by this whole affair."

"Why not remove the knife?"

I glowered at him. "If I do, you stay put. No tricks. Don't open your mouth to yell for help because this knife will be in your throat before you can."

He smiled wryly. "They picked a good one in you."

"They did, but we aren't going to talk about me, we're going to talk about you. You said you made no such ultimatum to Earth, that you didn't send any purple disc."

"All true. I never did. To my knowledge, nobody on Earth right now did send it." He paused, then glanced up at me. "You say you came to this Time Era through a transitimer? How could your people have built such a thing? You have to be able to de-energize matter to accomplish that tricky little feat. Nobody could do that, in your day."

"The Sisters sent the instructions to build a transitimer.

They said they knew you were going to attack our Time Era. They wanted to stop you."

"As—how?"

I smiled at him. "By sending me through time to kill you."

"Ah! Of course. A paid assassin."

I scowled at him. "We of the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists are killers, if we must be, in the line of duty. We are not paid assassins."

The Tyron inclined his head. "My apologies."

I went on. "The Sisters said none of the unisexes could kill, that all their aggressions went out of them along with their sex, at the time of the plague dust."

"So I understand, yes."

I narrowed my eyes at him. "The Sisters also said you wanted to impose the rule of the unisexes on my Earth. But—"

"—that doesn't make much sense either, does it? I keep a harem of pretty girls to relieve my sexual tensions. I am as much a man as anybody in your time."

We both looked down at his manhood. It was not quite so domineering as it had been before we'd begun talking but it was not inconsiderable, even now. I nodded thoughtfully.

"Chalk one up for you."

He smiled faintly. "Shall I tell you why the unisexes brought you here?" He waved a casual hand. "Oh, yes, yes. To kill me. Certainly. But not for the reason you think."

"For what reason, then?"

"To prevent me from carrying out my projects."

"Like taking over the twentieth-century Earth?"

"No, no." He settled back more comfortably in his chair. Me, I hoisted my behind up on the table so I could keep a careful eye on him. He resumed speaking. "The Resistors want to stop me from freeing the people in the Mating Huts."

I sat up straight with shock.

And Anders Orion jumped me.

He took me off guard. I admit it. His arms went about me like steel cables and yanked me off the tabletop and up against him. The knife in my right hand was useless. I could only wave it feebly because my right arm was pinned to my side.

The Tyron kissed me with open mouth.

His manhood was right up along with him. He was all man, this guy, and my female instincts damn near, made me swoon. I fought him a little but not too much. If all he wanted was kissing and the like, I was all for it. Besides, I figured I could kill him some other time. Maybe.

His hands tore the bolero downward, so that my breasts sprang out and jumped up and down. His lips went down to them and his tongue ran over their smooth white skin for several moments. His mouth zeroed in on my nipples.

He had me standing on my tippytoes, whimpering.

He sure was a breast man. He kept at his suctionings for quite a while, until he made me forget I was anything but a very receptive female.

In between kisses he managed to say, "Am I a unisex? Am I?"

"No. Oh, Anders—of course not! All I needed was one look at you to know that!"

"Then why do you suppose I went to all the trouble of becoming Tyron of Earth? Not for the power, don't say it. I'll tell you—but in my own good time."

He lifted me up with both hands. His lips kissed down between my breasts and around my belly as he held me up there in the air. The carving knife fell unnoticed to the carpeted floor.

"I'll take you to the bedroom in a few seconds," he panted. "I just can't seem to get enough of this creamy skin of yours. It's delicious!"

"Why the bedroom?" I whispered.

He lifted his face, stared up between my jutting breasts. "We always make love in a bed," he muttered as if I were crazy.

"Yeah, I know. That's why I took so many liberties at the Mating Hut." I ran my hands down over his head, tickled his neck and his ears. "Why don't we settle down on that couch over there?"

He looked a little stunned. I giggled, "You see, in the twentieth century, people didn't make love just in beds. They did it all over the place."

"They did? But—"

He lowered me against his front. I still had on my stripper's panel but it didn't keep him from sliding a part of him up between my soft inner thighs to where it would do us both the most good. I tightened my thighs on him and smiled when he moaned.

"You see? Sex can be fun thing. It is a fun thing. It's no good when you feel guilty about it—and the unisexes have made all you real men and women feel guilty about it."

"The unisexes say it's okay to make love on or in a bed, for the purposes of creating children. The only reason they let you do that is so they can have little unisexes to bring up and take their places.

"Otherwise, believe me—they'd kill all the real men and women they can lay their hands on. They hate you. They turn sick at the mere sight of a normally sexed male or female. I know. I've seen them do it."

He was panting by this time, because he kept tightening and loosening my thighs about him. His eyes started getting a glassy look.

"Carry me like this—to the couch," I ordered.

He started walking, slowly and with feeling.

CHAPTER EIGHT

He didn't want to let me go when we came to the couch. He stood there with his arms about my waist and his hips moving ever so gently, and the glazed look was still in his eyes. I patted his shoulder.

"Be brave, Anders. Our fun has only begun."

He lowered me so I could stand. I backed away and sat down. He was standing up right before me, staring down at me and breathing hard. I ran my smooth palms up and down his hard thighs until he started to shake.

"I don't suppose you know about the love postures of the Arab or the Hindu erotologists?" I asked.

"N-n-no. What's an erotologist?"

"Someone practiced in the various arts of loving."

"The-there's only one way."

"Poor Anders. This is what the unisexes would have you believe. It isn't that way at all. Like me to show you a few variations?"

He nodded. The Tyron of Earth was too far gone to talk rationally. He was really hung up about what he wanted to do to me. So I figured I'd take the edge off his amorousness and, when that was done, we could go back to exchanging words instead of caresses.

[Swung about on the big couch, knelt there with my head down and my pale buttocks up. The poor man damn near died of excitement. His eyes grew big and round as he moved them over my crouching body, studying the backs of my thighs and my behind and whatever else was in between.]

"You mean you've never tried it this way?" I asked softly, wriggling my hips. His numbed headshake was answer enough. I added, "A change of position makes all the difference in the world. Go ahead. Try it."

[He nodded and put a knee on the edge of the couch. He slid forward, his hands coming up to grab my hips and hold me in position. I felt his fierce arousal, his hardness, as he lost control and rammed forward. A cry came ripping from his throat as pleasure all but paralyzed his strong body.]

To kind of take his mind off what was happening and to keep things in their proper perspective, I gurgled, "Those Arab love experts I mentioned call this *nik el kohoul*. The Hindu boys name it the *oolud*—*poolud*. Everybody believed it kept a gal from getting pregnant. How much truth to that there is, I wouldn't know."

I asked, "Anders? Are you reading me?"

He was huffing and puffing away as he kept on sawing at me. I heard grunts and groans and gasps.

No answer except the gurgles and the moans.

"I'm kind of giving you a lesson, Anders. You really ought to pay attention. What I'm trying to say is, you get a little fed up with the usual, right? Like eating steak or lobster all the time becomes a drag. You need a change of method the way you need a change of menu."

"Yes, yes. I fo-follow you. Except tha-that I'm not able to understand your rea-reasoning too we-well right at this mo-moment."

He let go with a wild bellow. The heat had been building in him so much, poor dear, that he was just utterly unable to cope with the forces pent-up in his flesh. His

hands tightened their grip on my hips until his fingers were squeezing me painfully. I bucked my hips back at him, helping him. I wondered if he would go to sleep when he was done, the way Evorn Ambol had.

He jerked and spasmed a long time.

Then he was pulling free and twisting around my head so he could kiss my mouth, murmuring, "To be killed by you might even be a pleasure, Eve Drum. But I wouldn't want you to kill me—until I've tried all the various ways to make love you know of." He paused and added hopefully, "You do know some more, don't you?"

"Any number," I admitted happily. "We'll try another after you've gotten your strength back."

I felt like Scheherazade telling *Arabian Nights* tales. I asked: "How come you wanted to honor me?"

Anders Orion squirmed over until he was sitting on the couch so his eyes could have a ball with my nakedness. He studied me as he said, "I go over the reports of all the Mating Huts. I saw what happened at your Mating Hut since your arrival. The number of pregnancies almost tripled. It was amazing. Nothing like that had ever happened before."

"More unisexes to make the world unsafe for people," I said.

He chuckled, putting a hand to my left breast and fondling it. "Oh, no. Not any more, not since I've come into power. We destroy the unisexes, except for a couple we turn over to the—ah—outside world to keep them quiet. Most of the children born in the Mating Huts are normal."

"Well, that's good news. What happens to them?"

"They are cared for in the top levels of the Huts, until they are five years old. Then they are brought to special Child Compounds which I've built. Here they are educated and taught to take their place in the future world."

"A world you are building."

"I'd like to think so. It's why I've made myself

Tyron. For no other reason. You see, I know what it's like to be persecuted for being a man."

[He bent to run his tongue tip across my nipple] "I'll have to tell you the story of my life for you to understand what I'm trying to do. And I'm not sure I can last that long, without asking for another demonstration of your techniques."

[My glance roved downward. Anders Orion was taking a big interest in my body and his interest was growing steadily] I watched it for a few seconds, then said, "Start talking, honey. Maybe we'll have to interrupt you, but it will be a pleasure."

"I was born in what the unisexes call the Outlands, that region that used to consist, in your time, of Montana, North Dakota and part of Minnesota, plus much of western Canada. There were no big cities there, most of the population had left these wild lands for the cities."

His boyhood had been spent hunting in the woods, fishing in the lakes and mountain streams. His people were nomads, of a sort. They had a horse culture, so to speak, their horses carried them and all their worldly goods in long treks up into Canada in the summertime, then southward into the States in the winter.

Sometimes the unisexes came after them, to round them up if they could and force them into the Mating Huts. But their hearts were not in their task. First of all, when the unisexes saw them, they became a little sick, and secondly, the wild lands were untamed, no place for city dwellers, which unisexes mostly are. It was easy to avoid their stun-guns.

"We saw them long before they saw us, because we maintained lookouts. The penalty for not reporting unisexes—or for sleeping on duty—was death. So our videttes were very alert to danger."

Like the Arabs, the real men and women would fold their tents and silently sneak away. The unisexes caught very few of them. Still, this constant hunting roused a

furious anger in Anders Orion. When he was twenty, he stood before the Male Council and proposed something unheard of for many centuries.

"Make war on them!" he shouted at a stunned gathering.

Nobody wanted to do that, except for a few hotheads. So Anders Orion gathered those young hotheads together and armed them with the bows and arrows they used to hunt down big game. The next time the unisexes came into the wild lands after them, Anders Orion and his hotheads slaughtered them all, except for one young unisex they took as prisoner.

The unisex told him about the huge cities and how the unisexes lived. He-she explained that the real men and women were not killed, they were kept inside Mating Huts. When real children were born to the women they were slain, all but a few who were kept for breeding purposes.

The baby unisexes were taken from the Huts and raised carefully, so they might perpetuate the race. As I had noticed, the unisexes did all they could to prevent the men and women from enjoying sex. This and the drugs kept down the birth rate. The population of the earth began to shrink.

"This was when I got my idea," Anders Orion murmured, pulling me toward him and running his lips up and down my throat. "Why shouldn't I form an army and fight the unisexes? They were not fighters, they had no aggression. For the nonce, I would pretend to be a unisex myself, as would my soldiers."

"We talked it over many times. The elders at the Male Council were very impressed with our victory. They didn't see how we could have stood up to them, let alone destroy their so-called army."

He was not interested in talking about himself any longer. He was kissing my belly and pushing me back. I lay

on my back, smiling up at him as he got to his knees. His eyes asked me a question.

"How about the *el modefeda*?" I answered his unspoken question. "Like the frogs are said to do it?"

He nodded, licking his lips. I lifted my legs, planting my heels against my buttocks. He inched forward until my knees were in his hairy armpits. He clasped them to him and drove into me. I let out a soft cry, he was some man. Then he began moving, under my tutelage, in the *neza el dela* motions, which are that of the bucket in the well. He dipped deep and drew back. It was then my turn to push forward and withdraw. This is a very gentle, easy way to make love, it heightens the pleasure yet maintains the *status quo*, so to speak. There is no sudden surge to spill.

I had no intention of killing him now, of course.

Since he was a man, and anxious to establish the rule of humankind over the freak unisexes, I was all for him.

He yelled and his hands cupped my buttocks.

His hands lifted me, held me quivering to his spasmodic jerkings. His eyes were closed and his mouth was wide open. His entire body shook. Then, slowly, the spasms passed and he lowered himself on top of me.

"I adore you," he whispered. "I'm going to marry you."

"Oh, no you're not," I giggled. "You have a harem. They don't think much of me as it is. We aren't going to make them hate me. Besides, I want to go back to my own Time."

At his look of disappointment, I said softly, "However, I want to help you smash The Sisters. It must have been The Sisters who sent the purple disc and who threatened us."

"Yes, to get somebody from your Time to kill me—a thing they were powerless to do."

"Tell me more about yourself," I urged.

He fell onto his side but kept his hands about my but-

tocks, holding us together. His face looked more contented than it had been at any time since I had first seen the Tyron of Earth. I guess I was taking all the tensions out of him.

"There isn't too much to tell. My army grew as I went around to the different clans in the wild lands. The younger men joined me by the hundreds. Remember, we had only bows and arrows, none of the fancy equipment the unisexes could lay their hands on.

"But as far as fighting ability went, there was no comparison. I invaded a couple of their smaller cities—spots like Missolena and Bismarkion—and captured them. We found plenty of weapons, the rayguns and such that had been used to fight us, whenever the unisexes could bring themselves to fight.

"With those weapons in our control, it was duck soup. We soon learned to use them, we forced the unisexes we captured to teach us. After Bismarkion, we moved on to other cities that fell without a whimper. To prevent anyone from guessing what my intentions were, I let it out that I was a unisex out to gain control over the entire Earth."

My eyes regarded this man carefully, "But couldn't they see you were no unisex? It seems obvious to me."

His grin was a happy one. "They didn't have your opportunities. Besides, I employed unisexes to act for me, taking them into my army as a Special Branch, after a time. I spoke over televising screens to the men in government. The common people knew about me but they couldn't have cared less. I didn't interfere with them."

When Los Ancisco fell, Anders Orion just about had it made. Now he had the flying machines and transport vessels of the entire Pacific Coast at his disposal. He made televue speeches to huge New Yorkon and Chicatroit, Philashington and New Orleansoxi. The unisexes were not inclined to fight. If Anders Orion wanted to be Tyron of the United States, let him.

The United States was only a beginning. With such vast power at his disposal, he sent out his real-man soldiers into the other wild lands, gathering the real men and women together. He sent emissaries to them, offered to build them cities and Child Compounds. He recruited more soldiers from their clans.

"These clans sprang up during the first twenty or thirty years after the space dust plague hit Earth, you understand," he said. "The first few years were the worst, because the unisexes remembered the delights of sex and their hatred was a frightful thing.

"They ran down and slaughtered all the real men and women they could lay hands on. They still had some aggressive instincts in them, which faded gradually with the years. My grandfather has told me how, when he was a boy, his family hid in the woods when the unisexes came man-hunting."

He was quiet a moment, thinking.

"There is no future for Earth, the way things are now. I want to change all that, give Earth a real future. To do that, I must eliminate the Mating Huts. I am determined to bring that about, but the time isn't ripe yet.

"It dawned on me that if I could speak with you, learn what you did, I might have something to offer the real men and women of my world when I got them out of the Mating Hut prisons."

I told him what I'd done with Evorn Ambol and the others.

"Making love is like any other human activity," I concluded. "It must be made pleasant, alluring. Those icky sacks the people were forced to wear, the dismal interiors of the rut huts, all add up to boredom."

Anders Orion grinned. "I'll appoint you queen of the clans. You can demonstrate your techniques for all of us."

"I'm going back where I came from, chief. But I might be persuaded to give a couple of lectures."

"How about a special one for me? Right now?"

"After you tell me how you overcame the rest of Earth."

He waved a hand. "There was really nothing to it. I'm no Genghis Khan, not even a Napoleon. I had real men wearing my uniforms, armed with real weapons. They were ready to fight to the death for me, knowing what I was planning. They wanted their freedom. Earth belongs to both sexes, not to one mixed-up version of a man-woman.

"We spoke with Lonchester, with Pariseille, with Milarome.

"We offered peace—if they would accept me as Tyron. Otherwise my army would invade their cities and their high government officials would be put to death. They had nothing to fight with; the unisexes would not. They gave in. It was all accomplished quite bloodlessly. I don't think a thousand unisexes lost their lives."

"And once in power?"

"Ah! Then I could make the Child Compounds, place my own people in charge of the Mating Huts. We ousted every unisex connected with the Mating Huts."

"Why didn't you get around to changing their way of life inside the huts? If you had to live inside them, you wouldn't ignore them!"

His gesture indicated his helplessness. "I never even gave it a thought, as far as clothes and such went. I just didn't know any better."

I said, "You keep plenty of wearing apparel for the girls you bang. Why?"

His eyes widened. "Say, that's right. Well, I'm a bit bored with—"

His palm slapped my bare haunch. "You've made your point, Eve Drum. I begin to understand now just what it is you did for the New Yorken Mating Hut. You shall do the same thing for all the Mating Huts, before you go back to your own Time Era.

"The Earth will be forever grateful to you!"

He made it sound like a speech, but maybe this was just his way of saying thanks; he was very grateful, I could see that.

"So what do we do first?" I asked.

He laughed. "Not so fast. There are a few more things you must learn about what I have done, as Tyron of Earth. For that, we shall make a little visit to the Pleasure Domes."

He got to his feet, pulled me up. "I'm tempted not to go, you're so exciting, but a little breather will do us both good." He kissed my lips gently. "We'll need clothes. We can't go out like this."

His hand yanked a pull cord. A man-servant entered, bowing low while I hid myself behind a curtain. In moments, some women were back with a green uniform for Anders Orion and a female version of it, with skirt and uniform jacket, for me. The jacket was a bit snug about the bosom but it looked good on me.

His uniform front was covered with all sorts of medals and campaign ribbons. I ran a fingertip over them, sighing.

The Tyron chuckled. He went to a small cabinet set in to a wall, pressed a button. A drawer slid out. He selected a handful of decorations for me.

"The Order of the Tyron, the highest honor anyone can receive," he stated, hanging a golden eagle and cross on a blue satin ribbon about my neck. "And campaign ribbons for services rendered."

"Do you have girl soldiers in your armies?"

"They're the fiercest ones of all. Their femininity is being menaced by the unisexes, you see. If the unisexes win, these women may never get to be mothers. And they want to be mothers, very much."

"I feel honored," I smiled.

We went down the long corridor out the door of the two eagles. A formation of Green Guards, rayrifles slung over their forearms, joined us from an intersecting corri-

dor. We all moved onto a descending seat-staircase. We boarded a number of hovercraft when we came to the long-distance transport tunnels.

Anders Orion set our course for Chicatroit.

"For no special reason, just because there's very fine Pleasure Dome in Chicatroit. There are also excellent Domes in other cities, as well." A smile transfigured his craggy face until he looked like a mischievous boy. "I built the Pleasure Domes to get the unisexes out of my hair."

"How's that again?"

"When I first came to power, there was a lot of opposition to my rule from the unisexes. They may not have been able to fight, they weren't aggressive, but they sure knew how to louse up a government.

"So I had to get them off my back. One of my science boys told me about the pleasure centers inside human beings' heads. Remember, I'm not as sophisticated nor as well educated as the unisexes, but here and there in the Mating Huts I found real men who were geniuses in their line—and I brought them out of the Huts and put them to work in the laboratories I took over for my own use.

"It was one of these geniuses who tipped me off.

"He used me as his guinea pig. He put electrodes in my skull, tiny wires that went right down to the hypothalamus—a little part of the brain about as big as a cube of sugar—and he turned on the current."

Anders Orion stared blindly down the tunnel along which the hover-car was hurtling. He managed a faint smile and shook himself.

"It was very disturbing. Because I didn't want to leave the laboratory, there was so much pleasure pouring into my body. That's right, through electrical stimulation of a tiny spot in my brain. Matter of fact, I ordered them to put the electrodes back into my brain again. They had to shoot drugs into me to quiet me.

"An unnerving experience. But it taught me that the

unisexes could be controlled. I let it be known that as a reward for deeds well done, the unisexes would be placed in what was called a 'Pleasure Dome.' I'd already ordered these Domes to be built, here and there.

"They were objects of great curiosity during their time of building. The unisexes snickered, called them Orion's Follies. They didn't snicker once they'd tasted what those depth electrode charges could do to them. Oh, no. They clamored for more of the same—and I can't blame them."

He sighed. "Quite honestly, I can't think of any other way to enjoy what's left to me of life than to spend the rest of my time in a Pleasure Dome."

"But that's like being some kind of animal," I protested. "There's more to life than pleasure."

"Is there? We do what we do for credits—or for money, in your Time Era—so that these credits will give us what we want. Whatever gives us pleasure is what we want. To some, power is pleasure. To others, a good roll in bed is the utmost pleasure there is. A man who collects takes pleasure in his possessions."

I saw what he meant. "And?" I prompted.

"We rewarded unisexes, at first, for deeds well done and for ideas suggested. When these initiates came out of the Pleasure Domes—always clamoring to be let back in again—the word got around that these Domes were something special.

"As more and more Domes were built, we lowered the standards for admission. In time, you see—I hope to put every unisex into a Pleasure Dome. They are fed intravenously—with proper foods to keep them alive and well but comatose.

"It's an expensive undertaking, but I can't just order the unisexes killed, now can I?"

I didn't know what to think. In a way, it was like an extra-humane execution, in which a person was placed inside the prison of his own mind and emotions. The

Tyron was getting these unisexes out of his hair, all right, but I wasn't sure about the ethics of the thing.

"No," I answered. "You can't order them killed."

He sensed the doubt in my mind. "They're happy, the ones we put inside the Pleasure Domes, that is. Don't you understand? For the first time in their lives they are actually getting enjoyment out of living."

"In other words, though their bodies can't indulge in sex, they're getting a bang out of it by way of their brains."

"Exactly. It's not only for the good of real men and women, it's for their own good, as well. Let's face it. The unisexes are freaks. Deep down, they know they're freaks, which is why they hate and fear the humans. Inside the Pleasure Domes, they are individuals. Their egos and their libidos, such as they are, are of the utmost importance, for the first time in their lives. They become tiny universes sufficient unto themselves. They enjoy what a real human being enjoys."

"Do they go voluntarily?"

He looked a little shocked. "Of course they do! I'm no tyrant, I don't believe in forcing anyone against his or her will, and that includes the unisexes." He drew a deep breath.

"I will admit at first it was not too easy. The unisexes were suspicious. They even fought a little. I had to trespass on personal rights then. But only because they thought I was going to execute them. So I got around that by inviting in a special committee and explaining what we were doing.

"After that, we had no more trouble. And as soon as the first initiates were released after a day of pleasure, they raised enough excitement so that we had to beat off the others who wanted fun and games, too.

"Now, there's no problem."

"Except for the Sisters," I smiled.

He nodded. "Yes, The Sisters fight me. I've never been

able to understand who these resistors are. I knew damn well though there was resistance of a sort."

"What are you going to do about it?"

His fine eyes slid sideways at me. I think he saw me as his conscience, in a way. "I should order them killed, you know. They've used the de-energizers and the transiter to interfere with past history as well as our own.

"They've attempted to have me executed, hoping that my programs would die along with me. They won't. I've picked good men to carry on for me when I die. So my assassination won't benefit them in the least."

"You haven't answered the question."

"I'll put them in the Pleasure Domes. By force, if need be. Once they've experienced those pleasures they won't want to come out again."

There was iron in his voice, and I glimpsed a new facet of this man's character. Anders Orion had not risen to his post as supreme ruler over all the Earth by being a namby-pamby. When a situation required stern measures, he applied them.

The hover-car slowed and came to a stop before a platform, the walls of which were decorated by paintings and niches containing statues. The paintings were of pleasant landscapes and seascapes, the statues were of pleasing symmetries of space and form. There were no human bodies shown, because the human body disgusted all unisexes.

We went into a vast hall where the nude bodies of thousands of unisexes lay inside plastic coverings. I saw smiles on every face, and the closed eyes and smooth brows showed they were engaged in delightful dreaming.

"The temperatures inside the plasticine coverings are maintained at a level that is agreeably pleasant. Not too hot, just right." The Tyron began strolling among the coverings, gesturing to call my attention to some face that was contorted in what would have been a sexual spasm of some kind, if these had been normal people.

"The electrodes do not feed such intolerable pleasure all the time, only occasionally, when other electrodes indicate that the dreamer is coming off the pleasure level into what would be the orgasmic stage in a normal human. Everything is controlled electronically, so that too much pleasure will not weaken nor debilitate the sleepers."

"Your boys worked it out real well."

He barked laughter. "I've done this for the unisexes, who are my enemies. What can I do for the real men and women?"

"You're giving them the Earth as their home."

"True. I've done that. But I want to do more. I want to give them the pleasures I've given their enemies." His glance touched me. "I need you for that, Eve Drum, you with your twentieth-century knowledge that we have long since forgotten."

"I'll do what I can."

We walked on. There were many tiers to this Pleasure Dome, and on every tier there were thousands of sleeping one-sexers. Suddenly I gasped.

"No wonder the streets are so empty of life! All the population is in here! Except for The Sisters, that is."

"Just about. It didn't take as long as I'd expected, getting them to enter the Pleasure Domes."

"Do you think, if I'd killed you—that The Sisters would have been able to remove these beings from their little cubicles?"

"Not without starting some kind of revolution," he stated. "The unisexes would have been fighting among themselves—or what comes closest to them for fighting."

"So whether you live or die, the unisexes are finished. Most of them will sleep out their lives here and you won't furnish any new ones to the present population of unisexes."

"And soon—in my lifetime, I hope—Earth will be populated only by normal men and women. Everything will be back as it was before the plague."

Several men in long white garments came walking between the aisles. These were the scientists and technicians, Anders Orion explained.

"Would you care to see how a unisex reacts when removed from the dreaming slot?"

"I certainly would," I announced.

The subject they chose was in his-her middle twenties, I should judge. Young enough to know that he-she had a reasonably long life expectation. He-she was feminine of face, with flowing brown hair and long-lashed eyes above a deep masculine chest with hair all over it, powerful arms and broad shoulders. From the navel downward, he-she was all woman.

Broad hips curved in breathtaking fashion above beautifully shaped, hairless legs, dimpled knees. I felt sorry for the unisex, suddenly. It was neither man nor woman. I wondered about his-her brain configuration. Did he-she think like a man, or like a woman?

The cover was rising. Deft fingers were lifting out electrodes. I watched the lovely face of the man-woman. A frown gathered on its forehead, the lips opened as if to protest this invasion of its solitary dreamings.

I began to understand a little of the grip of these electrodes. Imagine having only pleasant, happy dreams. Vivid, lifelike dreams in which there is pure delight all the time. I licked my lips. I would have liked to try out these electrodes, but I knew the Tyron would never consent.

He had almost fallen completely under the spell of his own hypothalamus. Maybe that accounted for his boredom with the sexual act. In one of these dreaming slots he had been pleased as never before. Until I came along, I am certain he felt he would never know that intensity of pleasure again.

"No!"

It was a scream of pure hate, pure fury. The subject was sitting up, aided by gentle hands, but his-her face was distorted as he-she shrieked out its despair. Its dark,

beautiful eyes went from face to face, and settled on that of the Tyron.

"You promised!" he-she screamed. "You said I could stay there the rest of my life. Please! I beg you. Put me back."

I pointed out, "You're just a vegetable inside that thing. Don't you want to take your place in the world outside the Pleasure Dome? You—"

"What for? There's nothing out there for my kind. Except boredom and frustration. No pleasure, certainly." He-she stopped and panted. His-her eyes went to the Tyron.

"Put me back inside it. Please, I beg you. I'll do anything you ask but just replace me."

Anders Orion nodded. He-she fell back with a gentle sigh. I stepped closer to the dreaming slot.

"What is it like?" I asked softly.

"It's more wonderful than anything you can imagine. I dream. I create worlds that are all my own. I can think while I dream, I am not fully asleep, you see. I am conscious.

"But my imaginative faculties are strengthened, helped by the tremendous energies being fed into my brain. I make worlds and live in them where I am lord of all creation. I have men and women to serve me, to cater to my pleasures. It is far better than—than this Earth. I leave that to the Tyron."

It was like a last will and testament.

He-she lay back and began smiling as the electrodes were re-inserted into his-her skull. I heard the quiet hum of machinery. He-she was back in his-her worlds of unending delight.

"What about the machinery? Does it ever stop?" I asked.

"We watch it constantly," one of the scientists explained. "Naturally, we don't want anything to happen to our charges. In case of accidental failure, we switch over

automatically to auxiliary equipment. So they're all safe enough in their snug little beds."

The Tyron turned away from the dreaming slot. I sighed and went after him. In my heart, I knew these unisexes were enjoying their lives for the first time. They were *somebody* in their dreamings. They were being pleased constantly and they would not have exchanged their places for anything else the Earth could offer.

I told myself that Anders Orion was a great man.

I was damn glad I hadn't killed him.

If his ideas became reality then the Earth would be once more as it has always been, the homeland of the human race, with the plague years like an unpleasant interlude. I had a feeling that future men and women might well build a statue to Anders Orion.

The door at the far end of the room opened.

Three unisexes in black uniforms entered, carrying rayrifles. And the rayrifles were aimed at Anders Orion and me, since we were the ones first in the range of fire. These were not stun-guns.

These rayrifles could kill!

CHAPTER NINE

I have been trained by the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists to react by instinct to danger. My instinct was to get the Tyron and me out of the way when those rayrifles opened fire.

I slammed myself sideways, taking Anders Orion off his feet.

Three beams of brilliant light swooshed past my shoulder, scorching my flesh, making the material of my jacket smolder. I yipped at the sudden pain but I didn't forget my training. I drove a hand at the raygun hanging in the black leather holster on the Tyron's hip.

The raygun came up and I squeezed the trigger.

My beam of light was to one side of the number three man, missing him completely. The rayrifles turned toward me. I got ready to die.

Then half a dozen beams of light from behind me erupted into bands of blinding brightness. The three uni-sexes burned to a crisp in those light beams. There was the stink of burned flesh, then—nothingness. The trio of would-be killers was gone.

The Tyron said in a shaky voice, "All right, Eve—let

me up." His face was the color of ashes, and I guess mine was about the same, because he gave me a rueful grin.

I climbed off him. One of his Green Guards shouldered me aside, loaned the boss-man his hand and pulled him to his feet. The guardsman was a mite shaken, too; his head might have rolled if the Tyron had been killed, so he flashed me a grateful look.

"Hey," I exclaimed. "I thought the unisexes couldn't kill."

"Nor can they," muttered the Tyron. "Unless—"

One of the older scientists was with us by this time, nervous and excited as a wet cat. He caught the unspoken question of his Tyron, and said, "Unless the unisexes have found a way to counteract the plague dust that removed their sex and their aggressiveness at the same time."

I jerked a head at a couple of the nearest cubicles. "If you scientists can cause pleasure by stimulating the hypothalamus, maybe the unisex scientists have found a way to restore aggressiveness by doing something similar to their brains."

"The hypothalamus or the septal region of the brain can be stimulated to arouse anger and aggressiveness, yes. Perhaps the unisex scientists got their idea from our researches."

"I couldn't doubt it at all," said the Tyron. "Well, this puts a new light on things. I can't have more assassination attempts made on me." His eyes bored a hole in me. "Can you take me to the place where they have their transitimer? It must be their headquarters."

"I haven't the faintest notion of where it is. We got into a hover-car that took us to the Mating Hut. This was in New Yorkon, of course."

"Then we'll go to New Yorkon. Stevens, alert the New Yorkon command. I want every manjack out on patrol. I want search parties working around the clock. No place

and nobody is immune from search. This is an emergency and will be treated as such."

The guardsman named Stevens saluted crisply and went off at a run. I said, "Apparently Talnov Kuyzen has given up on me."

"It's been weeks since they brought you here. I'm inclined to think their scientists have made some sort of breakthrough, that they made that breakthrough shortly after you came here. They've been perfecting it in the meantime."

We went down to the long-distance transport lines and boarded hover-cars for New Yorkon. The journey was short enough, just a couple of hours at the speed of the hover-craft, but when we set foot on the official platform, there were a score of high-ranking military men there to greet the Tyron.

"Have you located their lab?" the Tyron asked.

"We have, excellency. That is, we've found the place we suspect is the laboratory. The unisexes have barred the doors, they won't let us in."

"Go in!" snapped Anders Orion.

The officer saluted and ran. We followed him at a slower pace. There were armed men in those green uniforms everywhere. Me, I was the only female around so, naturally, they all eyed me up and down. I guess they figured I was the Tyron's personal property. But that puzzled them, as well, because Anders Orion had never before taken a female with him anywhere.

We went streetside where the many hover-cars the military had commandeered for us waited in a row for passengers. I got in and the Tyron climbed in with me. The hover-car whooshed off.

The Green Guards had surrounded a big building, and had turned its doors to drifting powder with their rayrifles. The Tyron and I walked through the blackish mist slowly settling to the floor.

I recognized the staircase and nodded. "This is the place, all right."

Armed soldiers surrounded us, escorted us down the many tiers to the basement levels. Here and there were frightened groups of The Sisters. These men-women had not been fitted with electrodes in their brains, it was plain to see. They had no aggressiveness at all.

They were being rounded up, their wrists were being manacled.

We moved into laboratories where the unisex scientists had been working on a great number of projects, all designed to turn the one-sexes into killers and to give them weapons that the Tyron's Green Guards did not have.

Anders Orion was impressed. "I'll have my scientists examine all this and make their reports, naturally. But from what I can see, it's a damn good thing we decided to act when we did. If I'd waited another few days it might have been too late."

And the human race would have perished forever, I thought.

They found Talnov Kuyzen in the educational rooms, working on a gadget that would broadcast electronic currents to the skulls of the unisexes inside whom electrodes had been implanted. As the doors burst in on him he straightened up slowly, an expression of diabolical rage making his features grotesque. His eyes saw the Green Guards, the Tyron.

Then his stare found me.

"You betrayed us," he shrieked.

"Sorry, buster. You lied to me—and to the people of my Time Era," I snapped back. "It was you who sent the disc, you who made the threats, sending a moving picture of Anders Orion across the centuries and a sound-tape of his voice, cleverly making it seem that he was doing the threatening."

The Green Guards were all around the little old man, who seemed suddenly older and more frail as the husky

guardsmen surrounded him. The rage began to ebb away and big tears started rolling down his lined checks.

"Just a few more days, that's all I would have needed. Maybe a week. At the most, two. And I would have wiped you all out, all you human beings!"

The guardsmen half-lifted him, taking him away from the machine he had been studying. The Tyron gestured at the gadget.

"You must have hated me very much to spend so much time and money on a project to defeat me."

"Of course we hated you. You're human!"

"And you?"

Talnov Kuyzen spat at him. It dawned on me that the rage inside him was based on the fact that he too, might have been Tyron of Earth, if things had been a little different. Maybe he had hoped to be Tyron after I had killed Anders Orion. I shuddered to think what Earth might have become if Talnov Kuyzen had been its ruler.

He was screaming obscenities as they carried him out.

"What will you do with him?" I wondered.

"The same thing I'm going to do with all the unisexes, now. Put him in a Pleasure Dome dreaming slot. Maybe he can dream he's Tyron of his own world."

"Do you think that's what he was after?"

"Don't you? Talnov Kuyzen was filled with an awful hate for all things human. Why else should he use the transitimer to bring you from the twentieth century?"

"Ah! And you think he intended to do what he pretended you had done—to invade Earth of my era and turn it into a barren waste unless they surrendered to him?"

"Once he killed me and became Tyron, that was his hope, I'll bet a million credits. He'll be happy in a dreaming slot. He can do whatever he wants in there."

His hand squeezed my shoulder. "I don't know how to thank you, Eve Drum," he said slowly, "but I know who can say it for me."

He would not tell me who he meant but when we got back inside the hover-car and it took off, I guessed. The hover-car went along the same streets as the one in which Talnov Kuyzen and I had traveled on my first visit to the Mating Hut.

"You're going to free them!" I exclaimed.

"Not I—but you."

He pressed a key into my fingers. When the hover-car stopped I got out and walked to the big bronze door through which I had first stepped to meet Evorn Ambol. My hand was shaking. I could hardly fit the key into the lock. When the tumbler turned, I pushed open the door and—

Surprise!

They were all there: Hanthol Phan; Evorn Ambol; the three doctors, their three nurses all swollen with pregnancies; Thintor Krumm, Unow Gentriss, the whole bunch. They ran for me, threw their arms around me all at the same time (it seemed), and kissed me.

When order was restored, Anders Orion—grinning like a model in a toothpaste ad—put his hand on my shoulder. "She did it, she set you free. You and all the others in every Mating Hut in the world!"

They cheered. Hanthol Phan told me the rest of the Hut was waiting in the many audience halls for me to speak to them over the televue screens. Then I was to lead them in a parade out of the Hut and into the streets. There were tears in my eyes; none of them had ever set foot on a city street.

A siren wailed in the distance. The Tyron looked annoyed. He stepped to the door, flung it open. A young man in an officer's uniform was running toward the Hut door. There was urgency written on his face, mixed in with the fright.

"What is it, captain?" asked the Tyron.

The captain saluted, handed over a sealed envelope.

The Tyron tore it open. He read the closely typed sheet of paper and the more he read the whiter became his face.

His fist crumpled the paper. "This changes everything," he said softly. His eyes touched me and the others. He shook his head. "Thank you, captain. I'll be in touch."

"What is it?" I asked.

He smiled grimly. "I won't tell you now. We'll wait until this ceremony is over. Time enough then."

"Is it bad news?"

"I don't know," he said frankly. "Certainly—it's unexpected."

His hand turned me toward the others. To their eager faces he said slowly, "Nothing must stand in the way of your happiness, this day. Nothing shall. Your grandfathers and fathers lived and died in the hope that this day would happen. To you, their children, has been given the gift they never received."

"Today, you are all free men and women."

"The Earth belongs to you. Tell them, Eve Drum."

They brought me to the Communications Room. Hanthol Phan spoke a few words, then turned the microphone over to me.

I am no public speaker but I did my best. I told them what they wanted to hear. They were going out into their world, they would take their places in it. The unisexes were finished. They were being put away in the Pleasure Domes to live out the balance of their lives.

"It will be like a bad dream, your years in the Mating Hut. You will never quite forget them, but the pain will be gone before the needs of the future. You have a whole new world to make over, outside these walls. You will have to decide what kind of world you want it to be.

"The task will not be easy, it will take time and effort, sweat and some blood and tears. But you can do what no group of men and women in the history of this planet has ever achieved.

"The doing will be a challenge, but the fruits of that

doing will live on after all of us are dead. Choose well, when there are decisions to be made. Eliminate prejudices of all kinds, remembering first that you are men. There must be no poverty, no hunger. Man deserves better than this from his fellow man.

"Make a good world, please. And—I know you will."

They clapped for ten minutes. Anders Orion was staring at me oddly, his eyes glinting with curiosity. When he had me alone, while the men and women were lining up in the corridors to parade through them and out into the streets, he drew me to one side.

"Whatever made you say that about prejudices?"

"I don't know. It just came out. Why?"

"That message I received just before you made your speech. It was from one of my laboratories."

He hesitated. I urged him with: "And?"

"I'd rather you see for yourself."

It was all he would tell me. We marched together side by side out of the Mating Hut door and into the street. The sidewalks were lined with Green Guardsmen standing at attention but with big grins over their hard young faces. This was a great day for humankind, all right. It was Independence Day for the whole damn world.

There were more ceremonies, more speeches, at one of the city squares. But even these ended after a time, and the Tyron whisked me off with him in an official hover-car.

The hover-car pulled in before a small building. It was one of his research labs, the Tyron explained, half-carrying me along with a hand under my elbow. A guard opened the door and we went into dimly lighted coolness.

An officer saluted. "The holding laboratory is on the third floor, Highness. If you will follow me?"

He brought us to a rising staircase. We got off at the third floor and walked along another corridor. A nurse was waiting for us, standing in front of two leather-cov-

ered swinging doors. She smiled, nodded, and pushed the doors open.

Five doctors and four nurses were in the room; with them was a man and a woman. The man and the woman looked utterly terrified. Each wore a white lab smock. Other than that, they had no clothes.

"Are these the ones?" the Tyron asked.

A doctor nodded unhappily. "Project CKL 3426 ATT worked, sir." He looked bewildered, a little out of his depth.

I asked, "Will somebody explain what's happening?"

The man in the lab smock said, "I'd like to know myself. You people are all real men and women. But—I'm not sick. I'm a real man—or apparently I'm a real man."

"Oh, you're real enough," muttered the doctor.

Then it dawned on me.

"You were unisexes—both of you!" I howled.

The woman nodded gloomily. "And now we're humans and I don't like it. I don't want to go into the Mating Huts. I—"

"There are no more Mating Huts," I laughed happily. I explained something of what had happened. The man and woman listened closely, quietly. I got the feeling they were both under strong sedation.

"You can go out into the world with the others," I concluded.

The man and woman looked at one another with sick expressions. The man said, "We don't want to. We're better than they are. We're unisexes at heart, the finest product of human evolution. Those others are rabble."

"You've got to be kidding!" I gasped.

The woman shook her head sullenly. "No. We can't help our physical appearance. This was changed in the laboratories and the hospitals where they've been keeping us. But we aren't a man and a woman. We are still unisexed."

I looked at Anders Orion. He stared back at me.

"We never realized this would happen when we began experimenting," he told me. "You see, right from the beginning, I had hoped to bring both the real men and women and the one-sexes together—by overcoming the effects of the plague dust in the unisexes.

"My laboratories have been working on the problem ever since I came to power. We believed there was a virus or a chemical compound unknown on Earth in that space dust. We needed to isolate it, to find an antidote."

"And you found it," I muttered dully.

"A few hours ago. These two," and his hand gestured at the man and woman sitting in chairs and scowling at us, "are the first changeovers. Apparently this isn't going to be the success I'd hoped for." He gloomed at the man and woman, sighing. "There will be other changeovers in other cities. I have a lot of these experimental laboratories."

I waited, seeing the agony on his face. He said again, "I thought I'd had everything solved so neatly. Put all the unisexes into the dreaming slots in the Pleasure Domes. They'll be happy, the real men and women will be happy. Now look how it's turned out."

"I don't see anything worth shedding tears over. So these two are real men and women. What's so bad about that?"

"Ask them," he told me, waving a hand.

It dawned on me. I muttered to the woman, "You still hate us, don't you? You hate all the real men and women."

She nodded, showing me the deadly glare of her eyes.

I said to the Tyron, "Leave the others in the dreaming slots. You won't have any trouble that way."

"Do I have the right?" he asked quietly.

That one was a poser. I said, "Stop work on your experiments. Put the unisexes being treated for the plague dust in the dreaming slots. At least until you find a way to handle the problem."

He nodded. "It's the only thing I can do. But these men and the women who have been changed by our treatments—what do I do with them?"

"Teach them how nice it is to be human."

He thought about that, then nodded. "All right. I will—with your help."

"What can I do?" I yelped.

"Teach them what it means to be a human being. Maybe—just maybe—they'll see our point of view."

The man and woman were still glaring at me. I told myself I was crazy, that these two or others like them might kill me before I proved to them what fun it is to be normal.

"Let's make a test case of this couple," I suggested. "If we can win them over to our way of thinking, then we know we can do it."

The Tyron nodded. "How do we go about it?"

When I told him, he laughed.

The man was Xenthor Krandol, he was about twenty-eight and husky. There was curly black hair on his head and although his skin was pale from being so long in the experimental laboratories, he looked pretty muscular, just the sort of young fellow who should enjoy a roll in the hay.

Ah, but would he?

The woman was older than he by a few years, she was a brunette in her middle thirties. I suppose I could have wished for a more romantic pairing, but I had to make do with the tools I had. I pushed the Tyron toward Xenthor Krandol while I went and sat down beside the woman.

Her name was Althona Weer. I began by telling her about the pleasures of fine clothes. She listened without showing any interest, then told me that as a unisex, she had worn the finest garments civilization could produce.

"Come with me," I said. "A unisex has no appreciation of beauty."

I selected an evening gown of black satin that hugged

the hips and billowed outward loosely from the breasts. The gown was slit up the side to show her legs all the way to her buttocks. She became a real sexpot in that dress and in high-heeled evening slippers. Under the gown she was naked and it showed in the way her flesh slid around inside it. She had a mean walk, which made her behind bounce around.

To Althona, a naked body meant absolutely nothing. She shucked right out of her gown. Naked but for black evening shoes, she waited for me to say something.

The unisexes had no feelings, I realized. There were no erogenous zones; it was as if all their love nerves had just withered away. The breasts, the genitals, were just lumps of meat, no more. There was no thrill in them, none whatsoever.

They got no fun out of being alive.

And in some instinctive way, they knew they were incomplete, that they were missing something the real human beings enjoyed. This was the basis behind their unswerving hate for real men and women.

I had to show Althona that she had erogenous zones. Not in so many words, but by deeds. True, she and Xenthor Krandol were only two changelings. There would be millions more of them, if the Tyron went on with his program of turning the unisexes into real folks.

The ethics of the thing fascinated me. Would it be better to leave the unisexes dreaming out the rest of their lives in the Pleasure Domes? Or—since the ability to do it was there—should they have their humanity restored to them? If that humanity should be given back to them by removing the space dust virus from their bodies, would Anders Orion be creating a monster that would make war on the real men and women?

One thing we knew for sure. The hatred of real men and women was not eliminated along with their lack of sexuality.

All that remained to find out was: Could the ex-uni-

sexes be made to understand that they had been given the greatest gift anyone can give a man or woman, their full inheritance of humanity? Was this enough to swing the tide?

I drew a deep breath. Then I put my hand on her naked breast and ran tender fingertips along its globular weight. Her eyes grew big and round as her dark nipple rose up stiffly. She shivered.

A memory of redheaded Talka was in my mind right now. She had enjoyed the manner in which I had caressed her flesh. Would the same thing work with Althona Weer? In a sense, Althona Weer was very much like Talka of the red hair. Just as Talka had not known a woman could please another woman with a bit of fondling, Althona didn't know that a human body could feel pleasure from a simple caress, no matter who gave it.

"What are you doing?" she gasped.

"Don't you like it?"

She hesitated, then nodded. Her teeth bit down on her lower lip and her eyes narrowed as I slid my palm up and around the heavy weight of that pallid globe. Her dark brown nipple jutted out. I bent over and kissed that rigid nipple.

"I had—breasts like that when—I was a unisex," she panted. "But they—never felt the way—they feel now. Ooooooh!"

I licked her nipple with my tongue. She squirmed and shivered, very red in the face. I whispered against the saliva-wet flesh. "Your sexual nerves were dead. Now they're alive again, and you feel everything the way you should."

"Do more of that," she whispered.

"Not me—but Xenthor Krاندول. He enjoys being caressed too."

"He does? But—but he doesn't have these things."

I smiled. "He has something else, honey. You'll get to know all about it a little later on. You and Xenthor, the

Tyron and I are going out to dinner. So climb back into your evening gown and make yourself pretty."

She flashed me a smile. I think her feminine instincts were already starting to work because she turned to study her nudity in the dressing room mirror, one hand on a bare hip, head tilted to one side.

I made her up with blue eye-shadow, scarlet lipstick and all the trimmings. She was a sex siren, a vamp, a heartbreaker, when I was done with her. She looked good enough to eat.

Me, I selected a white evening gown in the Empire style. I would have given much for a garterbelt and nylons but they didn't have such things in this Time Era. So I stayed naked under my gown, just like Althona Weer.

They Tyron was in dress uniform of deep blue with medals and campaign ribbons all over his chest when he and Xenthor Krandol came to take us to dinner. Xenthor Krandol looked like a Greek god in white jacket and dark trousers and a plasticine shirt. He seemed ill at ease despite his good looks, like a little boy playing at being a man. From time to time his eyes went to Anders Orion, and he aped him almost perfectly, bowing over Althona's hand and kissing it the way the Tyron did mine.

We rode a hover-car to a restaurant.

We dined on martinis (I supplied the recipe for those) and on steaks, under an open sky on a building rooftop. There was soft light from Japanese lanterns (which I'd taught a technician to make) and sweet music from a hidden orchestra. Overhead, there was a full moon.

It was very romantic.

The only trouble was, only two of us knew what to do about it. I noticed that Xenthor kept staring at Althona from time to time, however, and his eyes peeped down into the vee that showed the inner slopes of her big breasts. He would lick his lips when he did this and I thought: hooray for instinct! Maybe this wouldn't be as difficult as I'd imagined.

When the food was done, we danced. I wanted to get our two babes-in-arms closer together and let Nature take its course. We chose a waltz, long since resurrected from hidden archives by a research team working for the Tyron, because it was easy to learn. Xenthor watched Anders Orion all the time, or most of the time.

Me, I watched Xenthor. When I saw him flush and pull away from Althona, I knew we had him hooked. On her part, the woman went after him, thrusting her hips forward and brushing against what must have been his arousal.

"Having fun?" I called.

Althona laughed, nodding her head. The man was not so sure. He realized something new was happening to him, that for the first time his body was reacting in a way completely foreign to his unisex self. He was getting the hots, but he didn't know it.

When the music was done, I moved from the Tyron's arms toward the man and woman. He still had an arm about her middle.

"Kiss her," I said softly.

"What's that?"

I took his face between my palms and kissed his firm lips. My mouth was loose and wet, I wanted to hit him with both barrels. I sure did. He blushed red, he gasped, and leaned his face down for another. I slipped aside. I pushed Althona into his arms.

They kissed damn well for beginners. Althona was moving her lips around and moaning faintly and her belly was slumped forward, jammed tight to his rising manhood.

"Open your lips," I told her. "You too, Xenthor."

I waited a second, then added, "Use your tongues."

They caught on pretty good, even if I did have to take his hands and slide them up and down her bare back and then onto her soft, ungirdled buttocks. His fingers tightened when he felt those soft roundnesses under them.

They squirmed bellies together until they had to come apart for air.

"I like it, I like it," he said.

Althona said nothing, she only grabbed his face the way I had and plastered her open lips against his mouth for another bussing bout. The Tyron was beaming happily, but when he opened his mouth to speak, I jabbed him with an elbow.

Frankly, I was afraid he would say something male—and stupid.

I was Oh Oh Sex. My reputation was at stake here. If anything could make these two forget their hate of other men and women, a knowledge of what humanity meant to them would do it. I had them bubbling nicely at their front burners and I wasn't going to risk their cooling it.

"Let's sit down," I caroled.

I made Xenthor take an easy chair and bring Althona onto his lap. They resumed their kissing right away. I pushed Anders Orion into a matching chair and plunked myself down on him.

"Make love to me," I said, *sotto voce*.

He kissed me, his hand slid under my skirt and along my bare leg. I shivered, reacting to his caress, but I was more interested in the changelings than I was with my reactions at the moment. Honest Injun, cross my heart! When Anders had his hand out of sight on my smooth hip, I cleared my throat.

They unlocked their clinch to look at me. When Xenthor saw where Anders had his hand he broke into a big grin. His hand dipped under the black evening gown and slid up a white calf and onto a knee. The skirt was caught on his wrist and went up with his hand, disclosing a white leg and a very female hip.

Althona shivered when that palm reached her thigh. She gave a soft little cry and buried her face against his throat, as if ashamed to be seen like this yet so possessed by these sexual feelings—for the first time in her life, re-

member—that she could not stop Xenthor from giving her a feel.

Xenthor didn't know what to do with his hand when it came to rest on the pale white hip with the blue veins showing delicately through the skin. His glance begged my aid, telling me he damn well loved what was happening, but what else was there?

"Show some sex," I hissed at the Tyron.

"Oh," he said.

His hand started sliding around to my front. Xenthor gawked at what he saw, since my skirt was up to my bellybutton. He did what Anders did, then. Althona gave a little cry and shuddered.

I whispered to my companion, "We've laid the groundwork. Now let go of me and we'll show Xenthor and Althona what to do about the way they feel."

"You want me to stop now?" he gasped.

"It'll be better, later, if you do."

He released me grudgingly, but he stayed in the chair while I got up and walked across the few feet of carpet to the other chair. I tapped Xenthor on the shoulder.

"Let's go in the next room," I suggested.

"Is—is this wha-what real men and wo-women do?" Althona asked, letting me help her to stand upright. Her black hair had come undone and some of it dangled down as far as her bare shoulders. She looked slightly wanton and thoroughly lovable.

We marched into a bedroom of what would have been a penthouse apartment back in the twentieth century. It was just off the restaurant and was, actually, a kind of waiting lounge reconverted into a bedchamber by the Tyron's corps of engineers with an assist or two from me.

There were two beds, a couple of mirrors, some chairs, a hassock or two, twin tables. A man and woman could make love in any number of ways in this room. I had suggested these furnishings, just in case.

I walked over to Xenthor Krاندول and began undoing

buttons. I got his jacket off and his shirt. **[**Then I reached for Althona and pushed her in front of him. I pushed the straps of her evening gown off her smooth shoulders, yanked down the bodice until her breasts were out there in the lamplight**]**

"Oh!" moaned Xenthor.

[I brought them together so she could rub her breasts against his chest. She caught on and grabbed his arms, using them as handles by which to balance herself as she moved her hardening breasts up and down and around. She was sobbing softly, her eyes were closed and her full red mouth was a little open.**]**

Xenthor put his hands on her bare back, ran his palms up and down, helping her. He was biting his lower lip and there was a dazed look in his eyes.

"Finish undressing him, honey," I told her.

She nodded, still enthralled by the new and explosive sensations in her body. Her eyes cast me a look from under her blue eyelids. "This is being a real woman, isn't it? With a real man? Is this what you were trying to tell me?"

I nodded. "Like it?"

"Yes," she laughed. "I love it."

She was kneeling, pushing down his evening trousers and his undershorts. Her eyes grew very wide as his male prominence exploded into sight. She stared and stared while he stood like an erotic statue, marveling at the sensations that were flooding his body.

Anders Orion and I watched, fascinated.

Very gingerly, the woman lifted her hands and put her fingertips against the man. Xenthor cried out harshly, quivering. Althona looked at me.

"Did I do wrong?"

I shook my head. "That was a pleasure cry," I explained.

She laughed and put her fingers on him again. She was a child with a new toy, and she spent many minutes exam-

ining what she possessed. She leaned to kiss it, and then her tongue came into play. She was doing all this on sheer feminine instinct, I felt positive.

She was the high priestess worshiping at the male symbol, as women have worshiped since time began, because it is this which can make them mothers. Hers was not the knowing caress of the practiced courtesan but the carnal curiosity of an adolescent girl, strengthened by a strong sexual inclination.

Xenthor fastened his hands in her hair.

I had to stop them before he exploded because she was sobbing and using her mouth now in the *lecher la plai* of the French. I pulled them apart and lifting her, guided her to the bed. I made her sit down on its edge and lean back. Then I grabbed Xenthor and brought him forward.

I told him what to do. I advised Althona about the best way for her to excite him. I talked fast because neither one of them was in the mood for a lecture. I guided him to meet her. Then I gave him a swat on his behind. He lunged forward.

Anders Orion was dancing around on the edge of the action, ready for some of the same. His eyes bulged, staring at what he was seeing. I stepped up to him and whispered, "I envy you people. You're almost as innocent as those two. Right now you're discovering what it means to be a voyeur."

"A who?"

"Oh, never mind. Come on over to the other bed."

We made love in that bedroom for eleven hours straight. I showed Xenthor and Althona more than ten different positions. Seven of these were new to Anders Orion, too.

It was midmorning before we all fell asleep, exhausted.

When we woke, Althona and Xenthor were in another clinch. They broke off kissing long enough to tell me that they didn't hate us real people any more. That they want-

ed other unisexes to be made into humans. They would help Anders Orion and me.

"Not me," I explained, holding up a hand. "I'm going back where I came from."

"No," said the Tyron. "We need you here."

"Now look," I snapped, swinging around to confront him. "A promise is a promise. You said you'd send me back."

"I want to marry you," he pleaded.

"No soap. Besides, I'm not ready for marriage. I still have a job to do for L.U.S.T."

"Well, maybe I can send for you from time to time?"

"I'd like that," I nodded.

I leaned down to kiss him. He wanted more than that, so I gave it to him, as a kind of going-away present. Just before I bounced into sweet oblivion I told myself there really is a future for sex, after all.

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